

**Cyber-bullying:**  
**Policy Response and Perceive Impacts in a Saskatchewan School Division**

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Masters of Education in the Department of Educational Administration  
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By  
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## **ABSTRACT**

The purpose of my research was to analyze the process utilized by a Saskatchewan school division to create policy that addressed the issue of cyber-bullying. The research and data collection for this case-study was performed during the time frame of January 2008 to June of 2009 and occurred after the Saskatchewan school division had completed a policy that addressed the issue of cyber-bullying. The research focused on the school division's use of the policy process with no intent of evaluating the policy itself.

This policy study was a qualitative case study designed to develop an understanding of the policy response of a Saskatchewan school division in addressing the legal and social issues related to cyber-bullying. The analytical framework for this case-study was drawn from a staged policy analysis model reflecting complementary aspects of rational and critical policy analysis models (Ball, 1998; Blaikie, 2000; Dye, 2002; Levin, 2001). Semi-structured interviews were performed with school division personnel who were responsible for the design and implementation of an Anti-Bullying policy for their school division. All data collected was coded into one of four broad categories: policy origin, policy adoption, policy implementation, or perceived policy impacts.

Through a descriptive investigation I provided an account of the manner in which policy issues related to cyber-bullying were posed, of the explanations constructed, and of the policy directions formulated by a Saskatchewan school division. The analysis of the interview data revealed the influence of powerful stakeholders on the policy process, the existence of blended layers throughout the dynamic policy cycle, and the significance of each stage of the policy cycle in creating an effective policy in an ever-changing society.



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## **CHAPTER 1: FOCUS AND FRAMING**

Cyber-bullying has become an contemporary policy issue for students, teachers, and leaders within the education system (Brady & Conn, 2006; Brown; Lines, 2007; March, 2006; Patchin & Hinduja, 2006; Salvador, 2006; Shariff & Johnny, 2007; Willard, 2007; Ybarra, Diener-West, & Leaf, 2007). As more and more students become exposed to the act of cyber-bullying, school officials have been asked to intervene by the victim and the victim's parents. Although bullying in the virtual world often originates off-campus, through the use of modern technology its effects have appeared to be spilling over into the physical school environment leaving school officials unsure as to where their jurisdiction begins and ends concerning cyber-bullying activity. Some school divisions have developed cyber-bullying policies to help guide school officials, teachers, and parents in responding to cyber-bullying behaviour (Shariff & Hoff, 2007). This policy study focused on a school division's policy response and directions to the issue of cyber-bullying by developing an understanding of how and why such policy directions were initiated in the context of the studied school division, how it was implemented, and what perceived impacts it had from the perspective of those who were in charge of implementation in a school division.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to analyze the origins and development of a Saskatchewan school division policy on cyber-bullying with a consideration for the policy implementation and perceived impacts of the developed policy. The research and data collection for this study was completed between January of 2008 and June of 2009.

The information presented within this document represents the literature available and the knowledge and experience of a school division, concerning the focus of this research, during a snapshot in time and therefore its content and research findings are limited to the timeframe prior to July of 2009. The study sought to provide an account of the manner in which cyber-bullying became a salient issue for the school division, identify the way policy issues related to cyber-bullying were posed, discover the explanations constructed, ascertain the policy directions formulated, and discover their perceived impacts of the policy implementation.

### **Inspiration for Research**

I became interested in investigating cyber-bullying policy responses of Saskatchewan Ministry of Education and school divisions upon engaging in the content of graduate studies courses at the University of Saskatchewan. From my experiences as a teacher I was aware of student and teacher victims of cyber-bullying but was unaware of the apparent legal challenges facing school and division administration in responding to cyber-bullying behaviour that originated off-campus. Upon review of legal precedents from international cases, I became curious as to the governmental and school division programs, policies, and general guidance provided to the average school as to how to respond to victims and perpetrators of cyber-bullying. Upon further investigation it became apparent that cyber-bullying has recently been identified as a topical issue for students, parents, school systems, and a variety of media. Through an investigation of the administrative policies of Saskatchewan school divisions, it was identified that few school divisions possessed policies that specifically addressed the issue of cyber-

bullying. From my research findings I became curious as to how and why a Saskatchewan school division had identified cyber-bullying as a salient issue which led to an interest in the process by which they developed their cyber-bullying policy.

“Canadian research on cyber-bullying [has been] minimal although literature is beginning to emerge” (Brown et al., 2006, p. 19). Little school division policy development work has been found that specifically addressed the issue of cyber-bullying in Saskatchewan (SaskSchools, 2008) while it was becoming a significant policy issue for school divisions, parents, and students (Belsey, 2003). Based on research statistics, McKenna (2007) reported that one third of American teenage internet users had been the victims of cyber-bullying and 1 in 8 UK youth expressed that cyber-bullying was worse than physical bullying. A Canadian survey performed in 2007 by Kids Help Phone reported that 70% of respondents had experienced being the target of cyber-bullying while 44% admitted to performing cyber-bullying acts (Lines, 2007). With cyber-bullying becoming an issue on the educational policy agenda of schools, researching how the education system had utilized the policy process to address cyber-bullying issues was a significant research topic.

### **Research Problem**

As the numbers of cyber-bullying events have increased and become more severe, provincial and school division administration appeared to be placed under pressure to *solve the problem*. Pressure from media coverage, community stakeholders, victims, and parents of victims have placed the cyber-bullying issue onto the policy agendas of the province and school divisions of Saskatchewan. While the Canadian government has

urged school divisions to devise anti-bullying and harassment policies that include the virtual world, they have not provided the school divisions with much guidance concerning the legal boundaries that limit school administration's jurisdiction over cyber-bullying that originates off-campus (Shariff, 2005). In a state of uncertainty as to how to respond to cyber-bullying behaviour, division administrators appeared to be left with many questions regarding the best policy direction to be adopted in dealing with cyber-bullying. A review of on-line administration manuals for the school divisions in Saskatchewan found that two of 28 school divisions possessed bullying or harassment policies that specifically referenced electronic or cyber-bullying behaviour as of January 2008. With cyber-bullying as a relevant policy issue for school divisions across Canada, including the province of Saskatchewan, policy development for the issue of cyber-bullying had lent itself as a topical policy research project. Shariff (2005) identified that research within the context of cyber-bullying has begun to develop, yet the call remains for continued and varied study on the impact of cyber-bullying on society today and how to address this issue through the policy process. Furthermore, members within the provincial and national teaching federations have recognized the gravity of cyber-bullying and have called for an investigation of ways to respond to the issue of cyber-bullying through the policy process (Olivier, 2008).

### **Conceptual Framework and Research Questions**

The conceptual model used to frame the research questions reflects the four stages model of policy analysis as developed by Levin (2001) which consists of: policy origin, policy adoption, policy implementation, and policy impact. I used Levin's (2001)

conceptualization of policy analysis as four inter-related stages of the policy analysis process to develop the following research questions:

1. What was the policy origin for the issue of cyber-bullying?
2. How did the school division utilize the policy adoption stage to guide their development of a cyber-bullying policy?
3. What were the key features of the implementation process put in place to facilitate the execution of the cyber-bullying policy?
4. What are the perceived impacts of the local policy for cyber-bullying?

In addressing the research questions, this study utilized a qualitative case study designed to explore how a Saskatchewan school division responded, in terms of policy directions, to the issue of cyber-bullying. Due to a limited population of cases that met the focus of the research, the selection of a school division was based on purposive and criterion sampling techniques (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007). Through an exploratory and explanatory investigation I attempted to develop an understanding and interpretation of the experiences and perceptions of those who were involved in the policy formation, adoption, and implementation process at the school division level.

### **Definition of Terms: Conceptions of Bullying and Cyber-bullying**

For the purposes of this study the following terms were defined:

Bullying - unwanted, deliberate, persistent, and relentless, creating a power imbalance between perpetrator(s) and victims (Shariff & Hoff, 2007 p. 5)

Traditional bullying – general bullying that takes place in the school setting. (Shariff & Hoff, 2007 p. 2)

Cyber-bullying – willful and repeated harm inflicted through an electronic medium while in the school setting or away from the school setting. (Patchin & Hinduja, 2006)

Cyber discourse – the sharing of thoughts, feelings, and opinions with a potentially infinite audience through the use of electronic media, such as cell phones, webcams, email, and websites. (Weir, 2001)

### **Comparing Traditional Bullying and Cyber-bullying**

**Traditional bullying.** To define behavior as bullying, the bully must have the intent to harm the victim repeatedly over time within the context of an imbalance of power between the bully and the victim (Patchin & Hinduja, 2006; Smith, 2002; Stassen Berger, 2007). Interactions between students such as teasing, rough-housing, and other such conflicts that do not display a definite power imbalance, repetition over time, nor demonstrate a preconceived intent to cause harm would not be classified as bullying behavior (Whitted & Dupper, 2005). Bullying behavior can be direct or indirect. Stassen Berger (2007) simply differentiates between the two bullying behaviors by stating that direct behavior refers *to my face* and indirect behavior as *behind my back*. Direct bullying behavior was also identified as physical or verbal aggression, such as punching or name calling, while indirect bullying has been described as a more covert activity that involves a third party, like gossiping and social exclusion (Smith, 2002). According to Patchin and Hinduja (2006), direct and indirect bullying could be applied to cyber-bullying with person to person emails, text messages, and other direct internet communications being an example of direct bullying and examples of indirect cyber-bullying behavior being third party communications on social networking sites, web page postings, and social exclusion by denying individuals access to social networking lists.

**Social impacts of bullying.** In the school setting, bullying could be seen as a mean of securing social status by some individuals by using aggressive behavior that

directly impacts peer relationships (Smith 2002). Primarily, bullies attempt to manipulate the social standing and friendships of their peers through the misuse of their power and influence on those around them. In their younger years, students viewed bullies as unacceptable to the social norm but as they enter into the junior high stage, physical bullying begins to be seen as a means to gain social status (Stassen Berger, 2007). At the high school level, bullying tactics have been seen to strategically rely more heavily on verbal and social bullying than that of physical bullying. School officials have been able to more easily address physical bullying than the covert incidences of verbal and social bullying (Patchin & Hinduja, 2006). Much of the covert verbal and social bullying experienced by students now has begun to occur through cyber communications. According to the Fact and News information provided on cyberbullying.ca almost 50% of Canadian students use the internet for an hour or more per day, 60% use instant messaging (IM) and social communication sites such as chat rooms and Facebook, and of those students with cyber communication access, 74% use IM several times per week.

**Impact on the learning environment.** Bullying has been identified as the most prominent type of low-level violence displayed in today's education system (Whitted & Dupper, 2005). The harassment and abuse experienced by students has ultimately had a negative effect on their academic success and has also created a school culture that does not support a safe learning environment (Patchin & Hinduja, 2006). The persistent harassment by the bully has often resulted in the victim experiencing physical, psychological, and social abuse with both short and long term effects which include depression, exclusion from groups, and reduced self-esteem. If the low-level violence of



bullying behavior is not dealt with appropriately the result could be behaviors that escalate to episodes of high-level violence which ultimately result in threats to students and school safety (Whitted & Dupper, 2005).

**Bullying in cyber space: The act of cyber-bullying.** Over the years, the complex social structure of bullying and the bully, victim, and observer roles within, has remained relatively consistent. However, the explosion of new technological communication devices has added a contemporary dimension to the social structure of bullying through the introduction of the cyber-bully. The inappropriate cyber discourse, such as cyber-bullying and cyber-harassment behaviors, of students can be defined as *cyber-bullying* and *cyber-libel* behavior (Shariff & Johnny, 2007). Cyber-bullying occurs when a student(s) engages in covert written, visual, or verbal psychological attacks on their person(s) of target through the use of email, cell phones, websites, and other forms of electronic media, to create a social power imbalance (Keith & Martin, 2005; Shariff & Gouin, 2005). Cyber-bullying behavior has been identified as a “psychologically devastating form of social cruelty among adolescence that is unwanted, deliberate, persistent, and often results in social exclusion by the production of power imbalances” (Shariff, 2005, p. 467). Simply put, anyone “who repeatedly misuses technology to harass, intimidate, or terrorize another person” can be considered a cyber-bully (Franek, 2005, p. 39). When students use electronic media to make defamatory statements against another person, they are performing cyber-libel behaviors. Cyber-libel behavior can be explained as cyber communications (i.e. hurtful rumors or threats) targeted at a particular person(s) with the purpose of issuing personal insults toward their target and injuring the

targets reputation (Shariff & Johnny, 2007). Inappropriate cyber discourse is commonly performed as a covert operation through the use of virtual aliases or pseudonyms. From this powerful platform of anonymity students have been able to utilize several different forms of cyber-bullying techniques.

Cyber-bullying can take on many different forms such as *flaming*, *outing*, *excluding*, *masquerading*, or *cyber-stalking* (virtual harassment) (Bamford, 2004; Brown, Jackson, & Cassidy, 2006; Gillespie, 2006). *Flaming* has been explained as a form of cyber-bullying where students engage in a virtual fight, hurling insults and accusations and at one another or between the target and a group of peers. *Outing* has involved a variety of techniques where personal and private information about a particular individual has been forwarded or posted within the virtual community without consent. Outing could involve a breach of trust by friends or acquaintances where information was shared with the social community in the form of innocent comments made about peer members, personal love/hate thoughts and feelings, or even private communications regarding personal experiences or trials, at the expense of the bully's target. When peer members reject the inclusion of individuals from virtual communications within chat rooms, text messages, and email communications, or simply ignore, or possibly refuse to respond to, the targets attempts to be included in the virtual communications the peer members have demonstrated their power of exclusion. *Masquerading* has involved the passing of information within the virtual community through the disguise of a peer member's identity. In the masquerading method a deviant imposter(s) may send inappropriate or offensive information to the virtual social community upon acquisition of a peer's cell

phone or perhaps after obtaining the password for the target's email account or social networking site. The impact of masquerading has been quite powerful as it is a method of cyber-bullying that provides great difficulty for the target to prove their innocence to the social community and supervising adults. The final method of cyber-bullying identified in this paper is *cyber-stalking*. Cyber-stalking has involved the prolonged victimization of a target that includes experiences of intimidation, social and psychological abuse, and in some cases even threats to the victim's safety. Be it through flaming, outing, excluding, masquerading, or cyber-stalking, cyber-bullying utilizes electronic media devices to inflict harm onto specific individuals, or a group of individuals, as an attempt to reinforce a power imbalance within the social setting.

**Tools of cyber-bullying.** Information and communication technologies (ICT), such as mobile phones and internet based communications, have offered its users an infinite audience to share their thoughts, feelings, and opinions (Bamford, 2004; Gillespie, 2006). Through ICT, students have been exposed to and have learned to utilize methods of "multimodal communications (sound, picture, animation, and photographic)" to engage in cyber-bullying activities (Bamford, 2004, p. 2). According to Shariff and Gounin (2005, p. 3) the electronic tools students use to engage in written and verbal cyber-bullying have included:

- A. cell-phones
- B. web-logs and web-sites
- C. on-line chat rooms
- d. MUD rooms (multi-user domains where individuals take on different characters)
- e. Xangas (on-line personal profiles where some adolescents create lists of people they do not like).

When it comes to contemporary technological communication devices, students have often understood how they work and how to use them in ways that have far surpassed most adults (Shariff & Hoff, 2007). While students may be technologically savvy, they are still developing their psychological, social self and need guidance from adults to develop appropriate cyber behaviors.

The question of how schools have addressed and attempted to regulate the cyber behaviors of their students was an interesting one. While the context of this investigation was cyber-bullying, the research performed was that of a policy study. More specifically, the research will focus on the policy response of one Saskatchewan school division to the issue of cyber-bullying.

### **Assumptions**

The following factors were assumed for this research:

1. I assumed that the data provided from the interviews was accurate and reliable.
2. It was assumed that the chosen division engaged in a policy development cycle when determining a policy direction for cyber-bullying.
3. The investigation was performed under the assumption that the data collection focus and techniques developed were reliable and accurate.
4. By providing interview participants an opportunity to read their transcripts and approve or alter their statements it was assumed the information documented was accurate and reliable.
5. It assumed that using direct interview quotes added validity to my data analysis.

6. I engaged in a process where my interview questions were reviewed and supported by an individual who was educated and experienced in policy studies and therefore assumed my interview questions to have gained a level of trustworthiness.
7. It was assumed that trustworthiness of my interview protocol was attained by engaging in a single trial interview process with an individual not involved in the study but experienced in policy formation.
8. I assumed that gaining ethics approval meant my research methods were trustworthy.

### **Research Delimitations**

This study was exploratory, explanatory, and descriptive: “analyzing policy is akin to trying to figure out which maps people used by studying the paths they took on their journey” (Pal, 1987, p. 13). Pal refers to the scope of this form of policy analysis as knowledge *of* the policy process. The following factors contribute to the framing of this research:

1. This research was delimited to one Saskatchewan school division.
2. This research was delimited to a sample of those within the chosen school division that participated in the cyber-bullying policy cycle.
3. While provincial and division policy framework was analyzed to assist in understanding the context, as delimitation, the research did not focus on determining how the policies addressing the issue of cyber-bullying have fared *in action* in terms of outcomes.
4. This research was delimited to the processes by which issues were recognized and placed on the local school division’s policy agenda, were perceived and defined

by various interested policy actors, then further explored, articulated, challenged, in some cases, given an authoritative definition while keeping others off the policy agenda (Rocheffort & Cobb, 1993).

5. The research data were collected from January 2008 to July 2009.

### **Research Limitations**

Case studies have allowed for the investigation of unique phenomenon within real-life context, yet there were some limitations identified to this research method. The following factors were potential restrictions for this research:

1. The qualitative analysis of unique cases has often led to great difficulty in generalizing the findings to other situations (Gall et al., 2007).
2. One school division from a small number of Saskatchewan school divisions that have formed cyber-bullying policy was approached to participate in semi-structured interviews and therefore the interview participant population was also small.
3. The data collected from the interviews were limited to the level of participation of those interviewed and the accuracy of the information shared.
4. Ethical concerns have been known to arise in case study research when reporting findings in that the identity of participants and organizations may have been difficult to disguise.

### **Research Significance**

This section cyber-bullying has been identified as an emerging policy issue for school boards with identification of the state of inclusion of the topic of cyber-bullying in

Saskatchewan school division policies as of January 2008. Practical, real-life situations were utilized to assist in painting an accurate account of cyber-bullying as a legitimate policy concern for school divisions.

### **Cyber-bullying: An Emerging Policy Issue**

School officials were finding cyber-bullying to be “increasingly difficult to monitor and regulate” (Brady & Conn, 2006, p. 10). Governments were directing school divisions to form anti-bullying or harassment policies while providing limited legal framework when it comes to issues of off-campus student behavior which ultimately affects the school environment. Although most governments had yet to set policies and laws regarding cyber-bullying that originates off-campus, public pressure on educational systems appeared to be influencing the policy agenda to include cyber-bullying issues (Nissley, 2006). For instance, Ontario amended their province’s Safe Schools Act, Bill 81, to include bullying and cyber-bullying to the list of offences that students could have been suspended or expelled from all provincial schools (Citynews.ca, 2007). This legislation appeared to provide policy legitimacy and school authority to discipline inappropriate cyber discourse that originates on-campus or off-campus. One of the national trends in responding to ICTs on-campus was the attempt of school boards to develop policies to ban student personal ICTs, such as cell phones, and services, like Hotmail and text messages, while on-campus (Brady & Conn, 2006).

### **Current Policy Development in Saskatchewan**

Upon review of the Saskatchewan Education Act (1995) there appeared to be no specific guidance with regard to policies for acts of bullying, electronic communications,

or cyber-bullying behaviors. However, in 2006 Saskatchewan Learning presented a province-wide anti-bullying strategy directing school division to develop bullying policies and procedures that promote a positive and safe school environment for all students (SaskLearning, 2006). Saskatchewan school divisions were directed to have anti-bullying policies in place by the end of the 2006 school year. As a means to support and provide guidance to school divisions in writing and assessing their anti-bullying policies, in 2006 SaskLearning presented their *Caring and Respectful Schools: Bullying Prevention: A Model Policy* resource as a conceptual framework for school divisions to follow. Within this model policy, SaskLearning lists cyber-bullying as a form of bullying behavior. As of January 2008 an examination of Saskatchewan school division home websites revealed 13 school divisions included bullying or harassment policies within their on-line administration manuals of policies, regulations, and procedures (SaskSchools, 2008). Of the 20 school divisions that included guidance for on-line communication through Acceptable Use Policies (AUPs) within their online administration manuals, 12 division AUPs included concepts of bullying or harassment, only 5 divisions identified specific policies dealing with personal ICTs, two divisions specifically referenced electronic or cyber-bullying within their on-line administration manual and one administration manual included language within their policy that referenced that off-campus behavior was eligible to be included under school jurisdiction.

Contemporary technologies have provided today's youth with new methods and tools by which to harass and bully other members of society in quasi-anonymity. Due to media attention, cyber-bullying had become a significant policy issue for school divisions



across the country (Brown et al., 2006; Shariff & Hoff, 2007). For instance, CBC news aired a television segment in 2002 focused on David Knight, a Canadian student, who suffered extreme abuse from his peers through cyber-bullying which resulted in his decision to complete his grade 12 studies as a home-school student (Leishman, 2002). In 2005 CBC news recounted an incident where a 14 year old Saskatchewan girl on her way home from school was attacked by two females with one of the approximately 100 spectators recording this humiliation and posting the event on-line for an infinite audience and the victim to recount over and over again (cbcnews.ca, 2005). In 2006 CBC news reported on a stabbing in a New Brunswick high school cafeteria to be the alleged result of off-campus cyber-bullying (cbcnews.ca, 2006). The media coverage of cyber-bullying appeared to have framed cyber-bullying as a serious societal issue requiring policy formulation by educational institutions across the country. However, there were serious legal challenges that had to be addressed while developing policies aimed at regulating and policing, to an extent, cyber space behaviors of students.

### **Legal Challenges in Addressing Cyber-bullying Through the Policy Process**

In this section the federal and provincial legal guidance provided to Canadian school divisions concerning the jurisdiction response to the issue of cyber-bullying, has been identified. Case law and legal precedents for cyber-bullying events by students have also been provided from the United Kingdom (UK) and the United States of America (US). This section concludes with connection made from the legal precedents to policy implications for school divisions.

## **Freedom of Speech and Legal Authority of School Divisions**

The rapidly changing communication technologies have made it difficult for the courts to keep up with legal issues of student cyber discourse, which has left the school divisions confused as to their ability to regulate and respond to the cyber discourse of their students (Wier, 2001). As the law has struggled to keep up, some school officials have found that protecting the freedom of expression rights for students has resulted in decreased safety in the school environment (Mackay & Burt-Gerrans, 2005). The Supreme Court of Canada has “not established legal standards to guide educators on the limits of student free speech” (Shariff, 2001, p. 7). Most cyber discourse cases had not reached the Canadian courts as they had been settled out of court prior to judges hearing the case and forming judgment (Weir, 2001). When considering disciplinary action and policy responses for student cyber-bullying behavior it is important for school officials to consider the duality of care for students concerning their need of care and protection balanced with the student’s freedom of expression rights (MacKay & Burt-Gerrans, 2005). The rights of children are protected on many governance levels. The 1989 *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child* identifies various child rights, some of which include “the right to education, the right to be protected from all forms of physical and mental violence, and the fundamental freedom of expression, thought, and conscience” (p. 424).

**Canadian context.** Even when in school, the Canadian Constitution protects the rights of students. Section 2b of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms (1982) states that “all persons have the right to freedom of thought, belief, opinion, and

expression, including freedom of the press and other media of communication.” Freedom of expression is protected under the Canadian Constitution; however, Section One of the Charter sets limits for freedom of expression; Section One provides “the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms guarantees the rights and freedoms set out in it subject only to such reasonable limits prescribed by law as can be demonstrably justified in a free and democratic society.” Section One of the Canadian Charter of Rights (1982) “places an onus on legislators and policy makers (including school officials) to justify why, in some cases, their policies are required – even though they risk infringing the guaranteed Charter rights of a few individuals” (p. 425).

**Saskatchewan context.** When students are found to have broken school policy and disciplinary action is set in motion, Provincial Education Statutes require a “procedural fairness [for] all administrative proceedings [including notice of a fair hearing] (p. 426). Section 148 of the Saskatchewan Education Act (1995) outlines the expectations regarding the mediation of conflict involving a student, stating if “a difference or conflict arises . . . the parent or guardian . . . is entitled to immediate access to procedures . . . [of] investigation and mediation of any differences or conflicts” (p. 88). School officials needed to take into account each of these legal frameworks when deciding if a student’s inappropriate behavior or actions could be legally disciplined.

The Canadian courts seem content to have the school systems create cyber discourse policy to guide the internet behavior of students as long as the policies (i.e. Access User Policies) support the meaning and intentions of the Canadian Constitution (Shariff, 2005). When inappropriate behavior or action by a student occurs, school officials

must consider the balance between providing an ordered, safe school environment and the student's right to freedom of expression (MacKay & Burt-Gerrans, 2005). School officials have a duty to protect the school community from abusive, violent, aggressive, and humiliating behavior against a student. The difficulty with taking disciplinary action for inappropriate student discourse is that unpopular or offensive statements are protected by the student's right to freedom of expression (Weir, 2001). If the discourse is violent or threatening in nature it cannot be considered protected speech and could be subjected to school discipline and criminal law. Canadian courts generally protect communications that are non-violent in nature (Shariff & Hoff, 2007). When the discourse involved defamatory statements tort law could be applied and school discipline may be an option if it meets the legal test (see American context section).

**United Kingdom context.** A case was made in the United Kingdom (UK) that supports the notion that the Law does have a role to play in the regulation of cyber-space (Gillespie, 2006). Through government and law the UK has attempted to regulate the internet by holding on-line behavior to the same standard as off-line behavior. Similar to Canadian and U.S. protection, cyber-bullying communications in the UK that are classified as harassing or *offenses against the person* are subject to Criminal Law application. For offenses against the person to be applied to cyber-bullying communications, it must be proven that the target fears immediate violence which can be as difficult to prove in the UK as it has been in North America.

From a legal standpoint harassment through cyber-bullying by direct communication over a series of events would provide more legal strength than a single

event, while engaging in cyber-bullying over a website or internet postings may not be legally viewed as direct communication with the victim. When reviewing cyber discourse of a harassing nature UK courts can also look to the Protection from Harassment Act of 1997 which states “a person must not pursue a course of conduct which amounts to harassment and which he knows or ought to know amounts to harassment” (p. 128). The drawback to the Protection from Harassment Act is that it required the victim to fear violence on two or more occasions and the courts inconsistent view of what constitutes a separate act. Some courts have concluded that cyber discourse, postings, and short message service (SMS) can be viewed as a series of acts within one form of communication.

Some courts have been reluctant to apply the Protection from Harassment Act to incidences of cyber-bullying citing the anonymity of the perpetrator and the uncertainty that the perpetrator was within geographic proximity would not support a reasonable person to fear immediate violence. Legal breadth was provided in the Anti-Social Behavior Order (ASBO) of 2003 which identified inappropriate behavior as “unusual behavior in public places, such as streets and housing estates, where this behavior impacted on the rights of the general public to a peaceful life” (p. 134). It has been argued the internet could be considered a public space where people are entitled to a peaceful life free of harassment.

Section 1 of the ASBO sets an improved standard to the Communication Act in that it stated that “acting in a manner that caused or was likely to cause harassment, alarm, or distress to one or more than one person” (p. 134). Section 1 does not require

the behavior to cause the victim to actually be in distress, rather the behavior needs only to satisfy the likelihood to cause distress. Section 1 eliminates the restrictions of geographic proximity and acknowledges the negative impact may extend to more than one person. Where the ASBO differs from other Acts in that the ASBO is initiated by the State not the person, it is not linked to criminal law so no record would be kept of the offense, and the magistrate has the power to enact restrictions to the perpetrator (a form of restraining order).

**American context.** Without established cyber-bullying case law of their own, the Canadian court system looks to American court findings for guidance when reviewing the protected speech of students in the virtual world (Weir, 2001). American court decisions on the protection of student speech in cyber-space were based on the legal test for student freedom of speech that which evolved from the student freedom of speech rulings from three distinct cases; Tinker, Fraser, and Hazelwood. With regards to the nature and scope of students' freedom of speech, Table 1 provides a brief overview of the key features of the legal positions adopted by the courts.

**Table 1*****United States Case Law for Student Free Speech (Adapted from Hudson, 2007 p. 8-9)***

	Summary	Ruling	Linking the Cases
Tinker v. Des Moines (1969)	“The Court ruled that public school officials in Des Moines violated the First Amendment rights of several students when they suspended them for wearing black armbands to school to protest U.S. involvement in Vietnam.” p. 8	The U.S. Supreme Court ruled that “school officials can censor student-initiated expression only if they can reasonably forecast that the student-initiated expression will create a material interference or substantial disruption of school activities.” p. 8	The Tinker, Bethel, and Hazelwood standards only apply to student expressions that are not truly violent or threatening. Expression that are sponsored by the school are subject to the Hazelwood standard, the Fraser standard covers lewd/offensive expression, leaving all remaining student expression to be held to the Tinker standard of <i>substantial disruption</i> or the <i>impinging on the rights of others</i> .
Bethel v. Fraser (1986)	The Court supported the School official’s decision to suspend a student for delivering a campaign speech laced with sexual references to a student assembly.	The U.S. Supreme Court ruled that “public school officials could prohibit student speech that was vulgar, lewd or plainly offensive.” p. 9	
Hazelwood v. Kulmeir (1988)	The Court supported a high school principal’s action of censoring “two student articles in the school newspaper that dealt with teen pregnancy and the impact of divorce upon teenagers.” p. 9	The U.S. Supreme Court ruled that school officials can censor most school-sponsored student expression if they can articulate a reasonable educational motivation for their actions.	

When it comes to cyber-bullying school administrators are in the difficult position of trying to find an effective way to strike a balance between protecting the freedom of expression rights of students and providing a safe educational environment for all students (Shariff, 2005). In their efforts to design effective cyber-bullying policy, the education system looks to court findings for legal guidance and educational research for contextual

information regarding the extent and severity of cyber-bullying in their division (Brown et al., 2006). By reviewing the legal precedents set from historical cases of Tinker, Fraser, and Hazelwood, each focused on student freedom of expression rights, educational policy makers can attempt to set cyber-bullying policies within the legal parameters set forth by the courts.

Just as the law has a place in guiding limitations for free speech of students, the law needs to assist school officials in regulating student discourse in cyber space through policy formation and implementation. (Gillespie, 2006). While the law is the primary influence on court decisions, each case finding is also a reflection of the unique context of every individual case and the experience and legal interpretation of each particular judge. In reviewing court rulings for cyber-bullying cases, the case findings can provide some conflicting messages for school officials as to where their jurisdiction ends and where their responsibilities lie (Hudson, 2007).

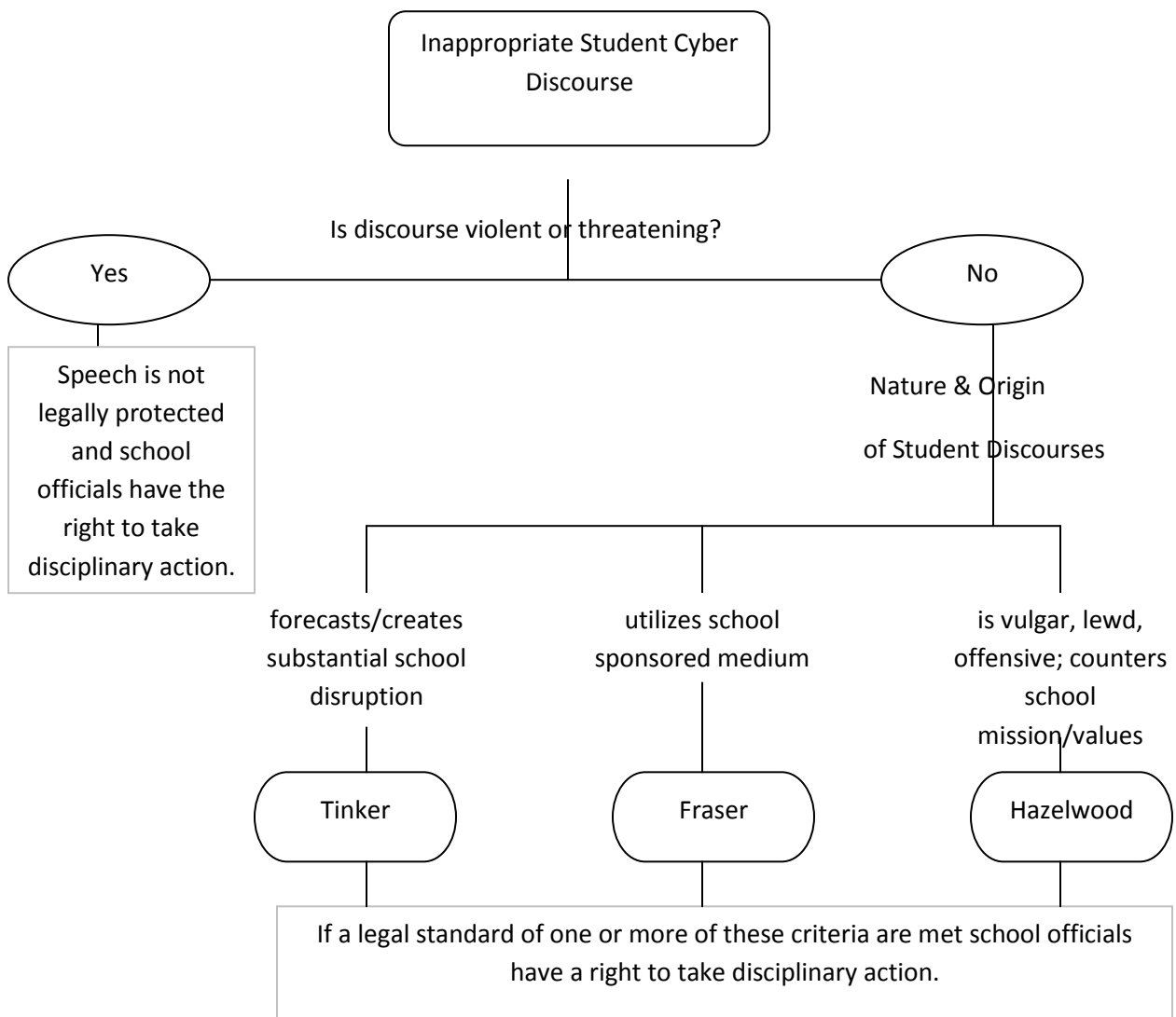
With conflicting messages expressed by judgments on seemingly similar situations school officials can become easily confused as to when cyber-bullying requires a legal response and when it requires the school to respond. The courts have also demonstrated a tentativeness to characterize the negative effects of cyber harassment as a form of actual violence (Shariff & Hoff, 2007) which in turn makes school officials tentative about disciplinary action for such discourse. Figure 1 provides a disciplinary action guide, based on case law, which was designed to assist school officials in determining whether a particular cyber discourse may be viewed as within the jurisdiction of disciplinary response by school administration. Adding to the tentativeness for American school officials to



respond to cyber-bullying was the Communications Decency Act (1996) which has “granted broad immunity to Internet service providers, [essentially leaving no one, internet service providers or their users, legally accountable for inappropriate cyber discourse]” (p. 90).

**Figure 1**

***Disciplinary Action Guide for School Officials Concerning Cyber Discourse of Students.*** (Adapted from Hudson, 2007)



### **Cyber-bullying Case Law**

While the upper courts have provided freedom of speech guidance regarding the physical world, findings in lower court cases have utilized upper court rulings to provide some guidance concerning freedom of speech protection in the virtual world. Case law concerning student cyber discourse has evolved in the United States (U.S.) lower court system (see Table 2). The U.S. courts have ruled that cyber “expressions that substantially or materially disrupt learning, interfere with educational mission, or utilize school-owned technology to harass or threaten other students are not protected by the First Amendment and allow school intervention” (Shariff, 2005, p. 478). While the First Amendment protects a student’s freedom of expression, the U.S. court supports “the right of schools to restrict constitutional rights when school property and student privacy rights are involved” (p. 478).

The U.S. courts ruled that cyber discourse could be limited if it infringed on the rights of others or if it was inconsistent with school values, leaving the student inappropriate behavior subject to school discipline. U.S. court rulings on cyber discourse also indicated when inappropriate virtual speech was accessed while on campus, aimed at schools, or aimed at school personnel it could be considered as on-campus cyber discourse (Salvador, 2006). The internet was held to the same standard of restrictions as any other media. Internet speech is borderless and can be accessed through a variety of electronic media wherever a connection can be made. The courts explained that the “pseudo geography of internet speech should not limit schools from supervising” (p. 68) student cyber discourse. This statement seemingly identifies the intention of the court to allow

school officials to consider all inappropriate cyber discourse by students as on-campus speech. As mentioned previously, a cyber discourse case has not formally been heard in Canadian courts; however, placing the cyber-bullying issue in a Canadian legal context would require a balance to be found that supported a student's right to freedom of speech and the responsibility of a school to provide an orderly and safe learning environment for all students (MacKay & Burt-Gerrans, 2005).

The legal parameters of cyber discourse are challenging for school officials to understand and therefore they require help in determining the boundaries to their jurisdiction (Shariff, 2005). Cyber discourse is fast paced and technologically driven; in order for effective guidelines and policies for cyber discourse to be created the education system and the courts need to work together.

**Table 2**

***United States Lower Court Case Law and Student Cyber Discourse (adapted from Hudson, 2007 p. 12-30)***

	Context	Court Ruling
Klein v. Smith (1986)	School officials suspended a public school student for "making a vulgar gesture (extending the middle figure) at a teacher at a local restaurant." p. 12	No connection was made "between the student's disrespectful behavior and the orderly operation of the school" (p.13); therefore the school officials did not have jurisdiction over student expression that takes place off school grounds.
Beussink v. Woodland (1998)	High school student suspended due to the creation of a home page, using his home computer, that "used vulgar language to criticize the principal, teachers, and aspects of the school environment." p. 14	A federal district court ruled that "disliking or being upset by the content of a student's speech is not an acceptable justification for limiting student speech under <i>Tinker</i> ." p. 29
Emmett v. Kent (2000)	School officials suspended a high school student for creating a home	A district court ruled that the student speech was entirely outside of the

	page containing mock obituaries of classmates. A rumor circulated at school that the site contained a hit list.	school's supervision or control. Sited that although the intended audience was undoubtedly connected to the school, school officials failed to present any evidence that the site intended to threaten anyone.
J.S. v. Bethlehem (2002)	School officials expelled a student for creating a Web site at home that contained derogatory comments about an algebra teacher and the principal. The school cited the extreme emotional distress suffered by the teacher and the disruption caused at the school. The student accessed the site at school.	"The Pennsylvania Supreme Court ruled that the site was not a true threat but still ruled in favor of the school [holding] that where speech that is aimed at a specific school and/or its personnel is brought onto the school campus or accessed at school by its originator, the speech will be considered on-campus speech." p. 30
Mahafey v. Aldrich (2002)	School officials disciplined a student for creating a web page mentioning Satan and identifying people the student wished would die.	"A federal district court ruled . . . that no evidence was presented to indicate that the website interfered with the work of the school or that any other student's rights were impinged." p. 30
Layshock v. Hermitage (2006)	School officials suspended and restricted extracurricular activities of a high school student "for creating a parody profile of his principal on MySpace.com, [from a home computer] . . . School officials said they had to temporarily block access to the school's computer system in part because of Layshock's page." (p. 15) Parents petitioned the court to suspend discipline until a ruling on the case was made.	"A federal district court denied the plaintiffs' a temporary restraining order, finding that the school officials had presented evidence that the Web site had created a substantial disruption of school activities, including a temporary ban on student access to the school's computer system. The case is still in discovery." p. 30

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### Policy Implications

It could be argued if school officials do not discipline inappropriate student cyber discourse that they are opening themselves up to Torte law action based on their standard

of care (Shariff & Hoff, 2007). In the North Vancouver School District No. 44 v. Jubran case (2005), the school division was found liable for failing to provide an educational environment that was free of discrimination and harassment for all students. It stands to reason that schools could be found negligent for not dealing with the cyber discourse if a student or their parents could prove the actions, or omission of action, of school officials caused injury due to the resulting physical or psychological harm that the student target experienced. It could also be argued that the Canadian case ruling in *Ross v. New Brunswick School Division No. 15* (1996), that “schools must provide conditions that are conducive to learning” (Sharif, 2005, p. 479), could be seen to include the virtual environment. So when policy development is being contemplated for inappropriate cyber discourse of students it would be wise to consider the legal applications that can be found from the student free speech cases of *Tinker*, *Fraser*, and *Hazelwood* (see Figure 1).

If a student’s right to feel secure while at school is included in the ruling for *Tinker*, then school officials would be free to discipline unsuitable cyber discourse behavior that limited the student’s ability to fully participate in school due to the social and emotional trauma caused by the inappropriate cyber discourse (Hudson, 2007). When inappropriate cyber discourse is directed at the school, directed at school personnel, or if off-campus unsuitable cyber discourse is accessed while on campus then *Tinker* and *Hazelwood* could apply and disciplinary action could be taken (Shariff, 2005). And finally if students create, visually share content with their peers, or forward inappropriate cyber discourse using a school media forum then *Fraser* would apply, providing legal support for disciplinary action. It is important for school officials to

remember that it is their professional responsibility under standard of care to protect students from the negative effects of inappropriate cyber discourse.

### **Overview of Chapters**

Chapter two has presented a framework for policy analysis based on selected models and theories which I judged the most appropriate for the context and purpose of this policy study. I started by introducing the concept of policy analysis with a comparative review of the rational and critical policy analysis models. I gave special attention to developing a framework that reflected a balance between the linearity of rational models and the multi-staged, developmental, and iterative nature of critical models in thinking about policy analysis. This was followed by an explanation of how I would apply this model to the specific policy context I would be studying.

A detailed description of research methodology based on a case study model is provided in chapter three. First, I discuss the relevancy and the basic elements of such a model and I present a practical methodology using these elements. In this chapter, I pointed out the highly contingent and complex nature of policy making within the context studied required gathering data about the personal perspectives of those experiencing the development, implementation, and impacts of cyber-bullying policies. Documents and archival record analysis alone does not tell the whole story.

Chapter four delivers a case study description specific to the study's school division choice, interview subjects involved in the research, and the story of the divisions previous Anti-bullying Policy development. Second, I present and discuss development of a division policy that included the concept of cyber-bullying.

Chapter five begins with a final discussion on the implications of the policy process from the research data, continues with connections made to the Dynamic Policy Cycle, and concludes with suggestions for future research directions.

### **Summary**

This policy study sought to explicate and understand in context the key features of the policy process that led up to the development, formulation, and adoption of a set of policy directions addressing cyber-bullying in a school division of Saskatchewan. I attempted to construct a plausible understanding of a school division policy directions dealing with cyber-bullying, an understanding grounded in the discourse of actors, interest groups, and institutions involved in influencing and defining, through those discussions, how cyber-bullying should be addressed in the context of the school division. In this policy study, I sought to capture and convey the core intellectual dispositions that shaped the policy problems that were posed with regard to cyber-bullying, the kinds of explanations that were offered, and the kinds of policy options suggested as solutions.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK: POLICY PROCESS AND ANALYSIS**

The focus of this research was to investigate how a Saskatchewan school division had addressed the issue of cyber-bullying through policy initiatives. This chapter presents a framework for policy analysis identified to be best suited for studying cyber-bullying policy at the school division level within Saskatchewan. The first section of the chapter provides an introduction to the concept of policy analysis and an overview of two approaches to policy analysis, the rational model and the critical model. The following section presents an explanation of the selected model to be used for the research as a basic analytical tool. The final section of the chapter provides an explanation of the dynamics involved in the policy process.

#### **Policy Analysis**

Before entering a discussion on policy analysis, an introduction to the concept of public policy was required. Public policy is a concept found within the field of political science. In its most basic form, policy can be described as a particular course of action, position taken, or general rule created by an institution (Pal, 1987). While academics have yet to agree on a common definition for public policy, various similar yet unique definitions have been found in academic literature. Pal defines public policy as “a course of action or inaction chosen by public authorities to address a given problem or interrelated set of problems” (p. 3). Dye (1987) stated that public policy was simply “whatever governments choose to do or not to do” (p. 2). Rakoff and Schaefer expressed it was the “action or non-action in response to demands” that formed public policy (Pal,



1987, p. 2). Although the definition for public policy varies in academic literature, each explanation of public policy appears to suggest that “public policies result from decisions made by governments and that decisions by governments to retain the status quo are just as much policy as are decisions to alter it” (Howlett & Ramesh, 2003, p. 5). In other words, public policy is a governmental course of action or in-action, by means of regulation, laws, general rules, or guidelines that are intended to influence society norms and reflect a view of how society is supposed to behave (public values).

Policy analysis can take two different approaches; that of assessing the impact of the policy in terms of adequacy between outcomes and original intent of the policy or the approach of focusing on gaining an understanding of the policy process from the policy origin stage through to the policy impact stage. Howlett and Remesh (2003, p. 207) express that policy analysis “assesses the effectiveness of public policy in terms of its perceived intentions and results”. Through a systematic evaluation, social and political policy actors investigate methods to improve policy outcomes (Howlett, 2004). Policy analysis is, therefore, focused on gathering information that will assist in effective public policy creation and implementation (Torgerson, 1986). Pal (1987) described two ‘streams’ of policy analysis: academic policy analysis and applied policy analysis. Academic policy analysis was described as a theoretical, objective process with a comparative focus of the explanation and understanding of policy development process. While the applied policy analysis was considered a more contextual, service oriented process, with a goal of evaluating policy effectiveness. In other words, the purpose of Pal’s first stream of policy analysis was to focus on developing an understanding of the

process utilized for developing the policy itself, while the focus of the second stream was to assess the adequacy of the policy outcomes in relation to the intent of the policy as observed in the field.

Pal (1987) also identified three general styles of policy analysis: descriptive, process, and evaluation. The descriptive style analyzes the content and historical nature of a policy, the process style analyzes the causes of policy development, and the evaluation style provides an evaluation based on logical, ethical, and empirical standards. Information from policy analysts can provide policy makers with valuable information concerning policy impact so that effective decisions can be made regarding policy issues (Yanow, 2000).

### **Models of Policy Analysis**

While theories present a framework for policy analysis, a model provides a “simplified representation, [by an actual physical representation or a diagram], of some aspect of the real world” (Dye, 1987, p. 20). With regard to public policy, models can offer simplicity and clarity to our understanding of the policy process, help us recognize important components of policy problems, and provide a structure to assist the policy analysis process in identifying and predicting consequences of policy alternatives. This section of the chapter will provide an overview of two policy analysis models: the rational model and critical model (Table 4). This overview will provide a background for the following section which will identify the policy analysis approach of my research.

**Table 3**

***Policy Analysis Model Comparisons (Ball, 1995; Dye, 1987; Forester, 1993; Pal, 1987; Taylor, 1997; Torgerson, 1986; Yanow, 2007)***

	<i><b>Rational Model</b></i>	<i><b>Critical Model</b></i>
<i><b>Epistemology</b></i>	Positivist	Post-positivist
<i><b>Goal</b></i>	Maximize social gain	Gain knowledge of cultural understanding and insight of policy
<i><b>Focus</b></i>	Evaluation of policy output and impact	Investigation of the policy process; how policy was formed, implemented, and understood
<i><b>Ethic</b></i>	Value-neutral	Value driven
<i><b>Methodology</b></i>	Evaluative; quantitative	Interpretive; qualitative
<i><b>Analysis</b></i>	Objective	Subjective
<i><b>Analyst</b></i>	Detached-observer	Participant-observer

### **Rational Policy Analysis Model**

The rational policy analysis model is based on the positivist, theory (Yanow, 2000). This model was developed around the concept that value judgments cannot be scientifically researched and therefore seeks to predict or control future events through gathering empirical knowledge through deductive reasoning (Pal, 1987). The general intent of rational analysis is to identify a regular relationship among facts in order to engage policy makers in policy process discussions and assist them in making informed decisions. A rational policy reviews the benefits and costs of all policy alternatives and chooses the alternatives that maximize social gain (Dye, 1987). “A policy is rational when [all of the social, political and economic values are calculated] and the difference between the values it achieves and the values it sacrifices is positive and greater than any other policy alternative” (p. 32). In theory, the rational analyst maintains an image of a detached, neutral bystander who is restricted to the observation of facts and logical inferences. The rational model takes the position that everyone behaves rationally and

therefore seeks the “best technical solution to a problem” (Pal, 1987, p. 45). Another assumption of the rational model is that “the value of society as a whole can be known and weighted [allowing for] a complete understanding of social values” (Dye, 1987, p. 32). A review of literature reveals that the rational analysis model has a strong historical presence within policy studies and continues to be used in the modern era. The extensive use of the rational analysis model has resulted in the identification of several critiques and benefits concerning its use as a policy study tool.

**Benefits of the rational analysis model.** The stages of a rational analysis model include a listing of all possible alternatives to solve a problem, the identification of costs and benefits for each alternative, and the determination and selection of the alternative that provides the maximum social gain (Kingdon, 1995; Pal, 1987). The use of the rational analysis model helps to keep policy makers focused on the important steps of the policy cycle (Weible & Sabatier, 2005). A structured and objective model helps policy makers in defining the problem, identifying the various alternatives, forming policies, and evaluating the impact of programs (Pal, 1987). The design of the rational model allows for the effective and logical management of data. Another important benefit and intent of the rational model is that it holds policy makers accountable by forcing the comparison of costs and benefits for each alternative regardless of the self-interest of the stakeholder.

**Critiques of the rational analysis model.** One of the basic critiques of the rational analysis model is that it is presented as a sequential process when in fact the stages are often intermingled (Jans, 2007). The rational model has also been described as a static, hierarchical system that is driven based on the power and knowledge of

authoritative, elite figures within the policy process (Neilson, 2001). This model also functions on the assumption that people will naturally behave rationally when in reality they do not (Kingdon, 1995; Pal, 1987). The cognitive capacity of a human has limits on their capabilities of memory, attention, and processing that reduce their ability to identify and deal with composite lists of all alternative solutions to a problem (Jans, 2007). The objective nature of the rational model also does not appear to correspond to the nature of the political process, its power dynamics, and how power works in the suppression of options and alternatives that reflect the needs of the nonparticipants in the policy process. Politicians appear to be motivated to form policies that will work rather than working to find the best solution to the problem (Dye, 1987). Instead of forming policies based solely on social welfare, policy makers often form policies based on their personal interests or a biased agenda. Conflicting interest groups have difficulty agreeing on the definition of social benefits and the meaning of the common good. There are times when the nature of politics simply does not support the purpose of policy evaluation, which is to enhance the merits of a policy (Pal, 1987). A final critique of the rational analysis model is that although it functions on information and knowledge it appears to neglect that most political conflict is due to socially constructed values rather than a lack of knowledge (Dye, 1987).

### **Critical Policy Analysis Model**

In general the critical policy analysis model takes the view of a post-positivist and focuses on the effect of public policy rather than its intentions (Ball, 1995; Taylor, 1997). Analysts following the critical model investigate how the formation and implementation

of policy have impacted public lives and social worlds (Forester, 1993). In this model analysts are to be participant-observers who seek to gain knowledge of and in society (Torgerson, 1986). Those who ascribe to the critical theory express that the truth of policy lies not in what a policy says but in the actions of those implementing the policy (Yanow, 2000). Taylor (1997) describes the critical analysis model as a sociological framework that “examine[s] how political process and policy making shape and are shaped by both social and power relations and the power of the state” (p. 25). The critical analysis model can also be explained as one that “allows for the investigation of power and resistance struggles and their effect on institutions and the policy cycle” (Yanow, 2000, p. 11). By investigating the origin and influence of conflict competitions within the policy process the critical model gains a better understanding of how competing issues find their way onto the policy agenda.

The critical model uses an interpretive form of policy analysis that focuses on the “meaning of policies, on the values, feelings, or beliefs they express and on the process by which those meanings are communicated to and “read” by various audiences” (Yanow, p. 14). It is not the intention of the policy that interests critical theorists, but the contrast between what the policy makers intended by the policy and the possible variance of meaning for the policy made by the public. The focus of this model is to investigate facts and values as they relate to the policy and “review [the] causal influences of policy context and history” (Forester, 1993, p. 3). The critical analysis model recognizes that people make sense of the world by passing incoming information through filters that have been developed from past experiences (Yanow, 2000). The critical analyst seeks to gain

cultural understanding and insight into human meaning by studying the use and context of artifacts (i.e. language, acts and interactions, documents, etc.) as society interacts with public policy (Torgerson, 1986).

**Benefits of the critical analysis model.** A benefit of the critical analysis model is that it investigates the culture and practice of the public policy process thereby accounting for all levels of the policy process (Taylor, 1997). By recognizing that all people do not ascribe to the same reality, the critical model lends significance to the values of individuals (Hogewood & Gunn, 1984). Hogewood and Gunn (1984) suggest that the critical theory approach influences the behavior of humans and the values of subsystems. This approach also “allows for conceptualization of the state and highlights the political nature of policy making” (Taylor, 1997, p. 25). Torgerson (1986) even suggests that the critical analysis model encourages political participation of citizens by enhancing their political education due the models attention to the context, history, and intricacy of the political process.

**Critiques of the critical analysis model.** A common critique of the critical policy analysis model is the weight it places on value judgments within its analysis (Pal, 1987). As a relatively new model for policy analysis the critical model has been provided with limited guidance for methods of process and procedure concerning insightful analysis. As a model with some non-traditional components the critical model has been accused of lacking structure and focus. The analysis of value judgments are often not viewed as compatible with reliable research results. In fact the critical model was highly criticized for its perceived reliance on subjective and interpretive approaches to research.

It was inferred that critical analysts produce questionable research results as the study of human artifacts and discourse patterns appeared to be difficult to accurately assess with a process that could seem equally difficult to replicate.

Each of these models focuses attention on different aspects of politics and policy analysis. However, they are not mutually exclusive and in developing an adequate conceptual framework for this policy study, I needed to attend carefully to the balance between linear and non-linear ways of thinking about policy processes. Virtually every analysis of policy uses some form of stage theory (Howlett & Ramesh, 1995; Levin, 2001).

### **The Four Stages Policy Analysis Model: Choosing a Conceptual Framework**

The focus of the investigation centered on the inner workings of the policy process utilized by a Saskatchewan school division to form policy regarding the phenomenon of cyber-bullying. I needed a conceptual framework that provided the ability to:

- develop an understanding of the process through which local policies were developed and implemented, including the form in which that policy direction was interpreted and integrated into the operational processes of a school division , in response to cyber-bullying;
- map policy process patterns within a highly interactive environment;
- develop an understanding of the perceived impacts of the cyber-bullying policies experienced by a school division...

Within the context of a school division in Saskatchewan, I hoped to gain knowledge of how cyber-bullying became part of the policy agenda, the manner in which stakeholders understood the issue, the process by which alternatives were identified and finally selected, the method in which policy implementation was designed and put into action, as



well as gaining an understanding of the intended process by which to evaluate the impact of the cyber-bullying policy.

The conceptual framework that seemed to best suit the nature of the research on cyber-bullying policy formation was that of Levin's (2001) model of policy analysis which consisted of: policy origin, policy adoption, policy implementation, and policy impact. His analytic model allowed me to bring to the surface different interests, perspectives, and actors integrated into the policy processes. His model also captured the incremental and complex nature of policy development and took account the full range of roles that policy actors play in the policy process. It also reflected the multi-staged, developmental, and iterative nature of policy making and analysis, and recognized that policy is fed by highly interactive environments and variables which could shift in unpredictable ways. The use of this model provided a systematic method to engage in policy process discussions and reflect on the decisions made throughout the process. The structure and design of the Levin's (2001) model allowed for effective and logical management of the data collected during the research. The policy analysis model also provided an opportunity to investigate the social, political, and economic values considered during the policy cycle by the policy makers.

Furthermore, Levin's (2001) model allowed me to acquire a more accurate reflection of the school division's use of the policy process to form cyber-bullying policy while providing a balance between rational and critical model of policy analysis. In order to gain a more accurate understanding of the policy process it was important to review causal influences of context and history (Forester, 1993). The critical lens embedded into

Levin's four stages model allowed me to investigate the influence of power and competition on policy process and the resulting dynamic pathways of the policy cycle created by such behavior as well as gain an understanding of how competing issues were placed onto the policy agenda. Incorporating aspects of the critical model allowed for the understanding that prior knowledge and experience affect an individual's ability to behave rationally in all situations. By incorporating aspects of the critical model I could investigate "how [policy] objectives fit within accepted social rules, demonstrates institutional support, or demonstrates opposition to particular criteria for evaluation" (Ball, 1995, p. 713).

The policy process, or policy cycle, can be simplified into four stages within the policy decision making process: policy origin, policy adoption, policy implementation, and policy impacts (Levin, 1998). While the policy cycle may appear to be linear in nature (Figure 2) it was important to recognize that the cycle was not limited to sequential development (Kingdon, 1995).

## **Figure 2 Linear**

### ***Model of the Policy Cycle***



The following subsections introduce the four stages of the policy process followed by an explanation of the dynamic pathways in a functioning policy process cycle (Figure 3).

## **The Policy Process Cycle**

In Figure 2 the linear policy model was presented through the four stages of the policy process: policy origin, policy adoption, policy implementation, and policy impact. The

intent of the Dynamics of the Policy Process model (Figure 3) was to identify the alternate pathways that exist within the policy process beyond the commonly identified sequential stages.

### **Policy Origin**

The most basic form of policy origin is government recognition of a problem (Howlett & Ramesh, 2003). Interests and ideas are expressed by stakeholders as an expression of core beliefs concerning an identified public problem and the government is asked to respond. The political recognition of stakeholders concerns is a reflection of the complex dynamics underlying the process of agenda setting. Public agenda can be defined as “the set of policy issues to which the public attends” (Jones & Baumgartner, 2004, p. 555). Various stakeholders work hard to use their power and influence to manipulate which problems are set onto the public agenda and how those problems are defined. Individuals and groups within society ultimately turn to their values, culture, and ideological predispositions in determining issue salience as to assist their definition of the issue and to gauge their conception of agenda priorities (Wood & Vedlitz, 2007). Identified problems become public problems due to policy windows created by the interest and influence of important policy stakeholders (actors and institutions) from the political, social, and economic domains (Schouwstra & Ellman, 2006).

### **Policy Adoption**

The policy adoption stage reflects the process of policy development. At this stage of the policy cycle a number of possible solutions to the identified public problem are identified and debated (Dye, 1987; Hogewood & Gunn, 1984; Howlett & Ramesh,

2003). A big part of this stage is coming to a compromise on the selection and definition of the problem to be focused on and its corresponding solution (Pal, 1987). The definition of a problem shapes its corresponding policy. When the definition of the problem is altered, either intentionally or unintentionally as a result of the policy process, the nature (intent and direction) of the policy will be unavoidably altered as well. Competing interests from the various stakeholders play a large role in the policy development stage as it is the stakeholders with the most power and influence that often result in shaping the problem definition and corresponding solution. As a result the most powerful stakeholders end up shaping the development of public policy itself.

### **Policy Implementation**

Once a policy has been developed the next step is implementing the policy. The policy implementation phase reflects “how governments put policies into effect” (Howlett & Ramesh, 2003, p. 13). Society is informed about the policy itself and educated on its intended meaning through government agencies, the media, and interest groups. As previously identified, problem definitions and policies are often ineffectively designed, so if the government doesn’t effectively communicate the intentions and goals of the policy then society (actors and institutions) tend to form their own perceptions as to what the policy intends. The implementation stage of the policy cycle seeks to set a policy in motion to solve the problem identified in the policy adoption stage. As the policy cycle is not rigidly committed to a linear structure, it is at this stage where problems are often redefined and policy goals are altered by those administering the policy into effect.

## **Policy Impact**

The policy impacts stage of the policy process seeks to identify the perceived impacts of the policy on those the policy targeted as well as the non-targeted groups in society (Dye, 1987). Policy analysis, or policy evaluation, is at the root of the policy impact stage of the policy cycle. State and social actors investigate the intended and unintended results of the policy and evaluate whether the policy goals have been accomplished (Howlett & Ramesh, 2003). The information gained from the policy impact evaluation could result in the “reconceptualization of policy problems and solutions” (p. 13). In other words, if the policy impact evaluation demonstrates that the policy has met an acceptable standard toward the intended policy goal the policy will most likely maintain its status quo, where as if the policy is seen to not meet the intended goals the policy issue will be resubmitted to an earlier stage of the policy process for reevaluation.

## **Dynamics of the Policy Process Cycle**

In Figure 2 the linear policy model is presented through the four stages of the policy process: policy origin, policy adoption, policy implementation, and policy impact. The intent of the Dynamics of the Policy Process model (Figure 3) is to identify the alternate pathways that that exist within the policy process beyond the commonly identified sequential stages. The policy origin stage is where problems are identified, support for particular discourse is mobilized, and stakeholders compete to define the problem in order to set their issues onto the policy agenda (McCool, 1995). The initial policy language and framework is set in the policy origin stage.



During the policy adoption stage advocacy groups compete to have their views and alternatives (solutions) to the problem legitimized while reducing the entertainment of views and alternatives from opposing groups. As with any stage in the policy process, if the competitive nature of the policy discourse results in changing the initial language of the policy (policy definition) the result is a change in the policy framework causing the process to return to the initial policy origin stage. If the alternative selected has powerful support and appears viable the next process entered is the policy implementation stage.

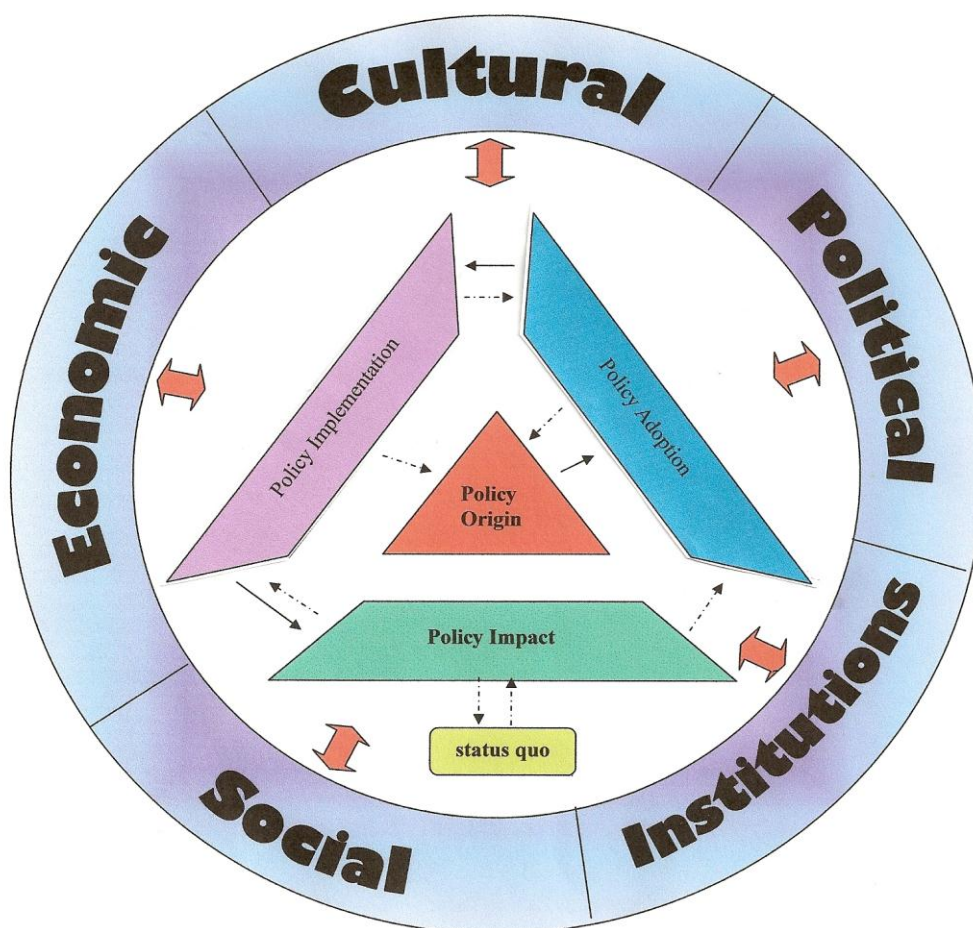
In the policy implementation stage stakeholders gather resources and support to set the policy alternatives selected into motion. From the implementation stage there are three alternate policy pathways: if the conflict and negotiations of this stage has not changed the policy framework and the policy alternative implemented appears to be adequate the process moves to the policy impact stage, however, if the resulting interactions at this stage has altered the definition of the issue then the process returns to the policy origin stage for re-evaluation or the process may revert back to the policy adoption stage if the issue definition remains intact but it is decided that a different alternative is required for a successful implementation of policy.

It is in the policy impact stage where policy analysis takes place as a means to track, describe, and explain policy changes, attain an understanding of the developments that led up to the implementation of the policies, and to assess the impact of policies on their intended goal(s). Four alternative pathways are available from this stage of the policy process: if the policy is viewed as ineffective due to its definition the process returns to the beginning of the cycle (policy origin) to reform the policy framework, a

return to the policy adoption stage is required if the definition appears to remain viable but the alternative chosen is deemed to be ineffective, if both the policy definition and the chosen alternative remain viable but the implementation strategy or process appears ineffective then the process returns to the implementation stage for restructuring, but if the policy appears to have met the intended goals set forth by the policy process the policy remains in a 'status quo' existence. The 'status quo' existence means that the policy will remain in effect, as is, until it is no longer seen as effectively meeting its intended goal; at which time the process re-enters the policy cycle at the policy impact stage with access to its established four alternative pathways.

**Figure 4**

*Internal Dynamics of the Policy Process Cycle*





While governments are given the task of policy making, their control over the policy agenda is limited by influence of party platforms, powerful stakeholders, powerful political and institutional leaders, public discourse, and political commitments (Levin, 2006). Figure 4 represents a simplified model of how influencing factors might affect the policy process. Explaining the policy process can be complicated and while this model does not include all elements of the policy process it provides a simplified version so as to be understandable and useful (McCool, 1995). The policy process involves an exchange of “information, power, rights and resources” between influencing stakeholders through the processes of “cooperation, conflict, competition, bargaining, exploitations, and occasionally indifference” (p. 391). Extra-governmental influences, from social, cultural, economic, political, and institutional arenas, can have a resounding effect on each stage within the policy-making process.

The political process is driven by social interactions between stakeholders with varying ideas regarding issue salience and how to achieve policy goals. Through powerful political conflict and political competition stakeholders place political demands on policy-makers as a means to influence the development of policy language and policy frameworks throughout the policy process (Mair, 1997). Figure 4 depicts a spiraling linear process of the four stages within the policy process, with policy origin as the anchor in the center of the figure, while also demonstrating the existence of the dynamic pathways of the policy cycle which was previously explained in the chapter. In this model the policy process is surrounded by the powerful manipulating forces that seek to influence policy-makers throughout the policy process. As the powerful forces of the

political elites, political coalitions, interest groups, and public opinions compete to influence policy discourse and framework the circle constricts placing pressure on the various stages within the policy cycle, thereby compressing the policy process spiral and placing great influencing pressure on the stage where issue definition is decided (policy origin). Stakeholders are ultimately biased in their views of how issues should be defined and how policy should be framed and therefore seek to influence policy decision-makers to form public policies that meet the stakeholder's personal needs (agenda). For whoever controls the issue definition ultimately holds the "extreme instrument of power" concerning the development of public policy (Mair, 1997, p. 947).

### **Conclusion**

The procedure by which public policy is created is an intricate and complicated process. While the policy cycle contains clear and specific stages, power struggles (dominated by conflict and competition) between interested stakeholders might influence the process of the policy cycle. Policy analysis provides a process by which to investigate both the impact of the intended policies and the influence or understanding of the policies by society members. By using the Internal Dynamics of the Policy Process conceptual model to investigate a school division's policy response to the context of cyber-bullying I was able to investigate the political, social, cultural, economic, and institutional effects on the stages of policy development. Through a use of Levin's analysis conceptual model I hoped to gain a deeper understanding of how a school division within Saskatchewan had utilized the policy process to address the issue of cyber-bullying.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

In this chapter, I described the research methodology based on a case study model used for this study. First, I discussed the relevancy and the basic elements of such a model, and then I went on to present a practical methodology using these elements.

#### **Research Purpose**

This policy study was a qualitative case study designed to develop an understanding of the policy response of a Saskatchewan school division in addressing the legal and social issues related to cyber-bullying. Through a descriptive investigation, I provided an account of the manner in which policy issues related to cyber-bullying were posed, of the explanations constructed, and of the policy directions formulated. I attempted to construct a plausible understanding of a school division's policy directions dealing with cyber-bullying by addressing the following questions:

1. What was the policy origin for the issue of cyber-bullying?
2. How did the school division utilize the policy adoption stage to guide their development of a cyber-bullying policy?
3. What were the key features of the implementation process put in place to facilitate the execution of the cyber-bullying policy?
4. What are the perceived impacts of the local policy for cyber-bullying?

Therefore, the purpose of this study was to understand the processes by which issues were recognized as such and placed on a local school division's policy agenda, how the issues were perceived and defined by various interested policy actors, then further

explored, articulated, challenged, in some cases, given an authoritative definition while keeping others off the policy agenda, as well as perceived impacts of the local policy direction for cyber-bullying (Rocheffort & Cobb, 1993).

### **Case Study Methodology**

A case study can be defined as “the in-depth study of one or more instances of a phenomenon in its real-life context that reflects the perspective of the participants involved in the phenomenon” (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007, p. 447). Case study research is the most widely utilized approach in education (Gall et al., 2007). Given the goals of this policy study—the development of school division policy in response to the rising phenomenon of cyber-bullying of students with a focus on the perspective of policy actors and institutions participating in the policy process—I chose to utilize a case study approach for my research. A case study approach that utilizes various sources of data (semi-structured interviews, documents, etc.) appeared to be the most effective form of research to bring the phenomenon to life for readers and allow for the broadest determination of transferability of findings for those within the education field (Gall et al., 2007). Using case study methodology allowed me to perform in-depth research with participants to gather detailed information regarding the policy process utilized by the stakeholders and the influencing factors they experienced. A thick description of the environment, participant behaviors, and participant thoughts assisted me in identifying categories and patterns within the data collected through semi-structured interviews of those involved in the policy process. I also made an effort to enhance the validity of the

case findings by including a review of artifacts and internal policy documents produced by participants within the policy process.

### **Data Collection**

This research used an exploratory, explanatory, and descriptive case study research method (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The analytical framework was drawn from a staged policy analysis model reflecting complementary aspects of rational and critical policy analysis models (Ball, 1998; Blaikie, 2000; Dye, 2002; Levin, 2001). While researching the inner workings of the policy process itself, I also investigated the influencing cultural, political, institutions, social, and economic factors affecting the decision making process within the policy process itself (see Figure 3). I sought information from four data sources:

- school division's policy documents, policy review documents, briefs presented by senior administrative team members, discussion policy papers addressing the issue of cyber-bullying;
- school division's archival records such as minutes, memos, etc. that have relevance to division policy on cyber-bullying;
- face-to-face semi-structured interviews of members from the senior management team who were involved in the formulation, adoption, and implementation of the division policy on cyber-bullying;

The study focused on an analysis of the origins and development of a division policy on cyber-bullying with a consideration for the intended impacts of the developed policy. In the interviews, research participants were asked to describe their role, their experiences,

and what they learned throughout the policy process as well as present various artifacts that documented their policy process journey. Interview extracts and artifact analysis were investigated to illustrate the multiple perspectives of the individuals at the division level who were involved in the development of the policy on cyber-bullying.

The research method reflected a qualitative single case study design with the unit of analysis being the policy process utilized in response to the context of cyber-bullying. The study engaged individuals (policy makers) who played important roles in the development of policy directions dealing with cyber-bullying for a particular school division in Saskatchewan. The school division was selected for research based on purposive and criterion sampling techniques. Gall, Gall, and Borg (2007, p.178) explained the goal of purposeful sampling “is to select cases that are information-rich with respect of the purposes of the study”. Criterion sampling is one of several sampling strategies of purposive sampling. In criterion sampling cases are chosen based on their ability to meet chosen criteria. In this research, Saskatchewan school divisions with cyber-bullying policies presented within their on-line administrations manuals, as of January 2008, were identified as possible cases with the final case selection based on accessibility. Criteria for selecting the research participants were based on their involvement in the development and implementation of a cyber-bullying policy as communicated by the selected school division. The participating school division was asked to provide me with contact information for the individuals who were directly involved in the division policy formation process. Each person that was directly involved in the division policy making process was invited to participate in the research project.

Table 4 outlines the framework that guided the development and selection of data collection methods and sources in relation to each phase of the study and research questions.

**Table 4**

***Research Phases, Research Questions, and Data Collection Methods***

Research Phases	Research Questions, Data Collection Methods
Review of the research literature	<p><b>Question:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>How is cyber-bullying conceptualized and treated in the research literature?</i></li> <li>• <i>What are the main conceptual frameworks that have been elaborated by scholars to describe and explain how and why cyber-bullying is a contemporary concern for school governance and policy development?</i></li> </ul> <p><b>Source of data:</b> Research literature review</p>
Analysis of policy origins and development process	<p><b>Questions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>How and why the policy direction on cyber-bullying was placed on the policy agenda of the participating school division?</i></li> <li>• <i>Who was involved in developing and enacting local policy on cyber-bullying?</i></li> <li>• <i>What were the key features of the process through which the policy direction on cyber-bullying took place?</i></li> </ul> <p><b>Aims:</b> The intent of this phase of the study aimed at providing a local policy history of cyber-bullying (why was the policy made and who was involved?), an account of the changing political and social trends related to the policy direction being studied, a profile of the process through which the policy was made, the main policy actors and stakeholders involved, and the core beliefs that shaped the policy on cyber-bullying.</p> <p><b>Sources of data:</b> Policy documents, policy review documents and drafts, and archival material were investigated. This was to complement the semi-structured interviews (Anderson, 1998) of key policy actors at the provincial and local level.</p>
Analysis of policy implementation process	<p><b>Questions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>How was the policy on cyber-bullying conceptualized, perceived, and interpreted by the implementing school division?</i></li> <li>• <i>What were the key features of the implementation process put in place to facilitate the implementation of the policy?</i></li> </ul>

	<p><b>Aims:</b> The intent of this phase of the research was to provide insights into the process and the extent to which the policy direction under study has been translated into policy actions and practices at the division and school level.</p> <p><b>Sources of Data:</b> Investigation of document and policy instrument analysis such as strategic implementation plans and reports, etc, were made and semi-structured interviews were performed. Interviews were conducted with key individuals within the school division who were instrumental and influential in determining whether a momentum for change was built up or was resisted as a result of their actions.</p>
Analysis of policy impacts	<p><b>Questions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>How were the transformations associated with the implementation of the policy on cyber-bullying experienced and what were the perceived impacts?</i></li> </ul> <p><b>Aims:</b> The intent of this phase of this research phase was to reveal changes in the behavior of school division and school-based administrative and teaching staff and of individuals directly impacted by the policy and of those in charge of translating the policy direction into actions.</p> <p><b>Sources of Data:</b> Analysis of internal policy documents and archival records were investigated to establish areas of change made to the organizational structure, budget processes, educational programs and curriculum. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to provide insights on the impact of the policy on individual on-the-ground experiences as perceived by those directly impacted and/or involved in the implementation of the policy.</p>

Each interview was taped and transcribed. Participants were given the opportunity to review their interview transcripts and were allowed to correct or clarify their content. Data gained from the interviews was analyzed through inductive and deductive reasoning to identify patterns and categories of analysis.

The data collection was guided by interview questions such as: What were seen as the main challenges that militated in favor of the formulation of a policy on cyber-bullying? What was the main policy issues surrounding cyber-bullying? How did the various actors in the policy process interpret them, and how representative were they of a wider consensus around introducing a policy on cyber-bullying for the school-division?



Table 5 presents the protocol that was used to guide the data collection from semi-structured interviews.

**Table 5**

***Generic Interview Protocol (Adapted from SaskLearning 2006)***

Policy Phases	Generic Questions
Analysis of policy origins	<p><b>Research Question:</b> What was the policy origin for the issue of cyber-bullying?</p> <p>Interview Questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>How did cyber-bullying come to be placed on the local policy agenda of your division?</i></li> <li>• <i>When was cyber-bullying identified as a salient local issue?</i></li> <li>• <i>What brought cyber-bullying to be placed on your policy agenda?</i></li> <li>• <i>What is your understanding of the scope of cyber-bullying in your province and in your school division?</i></li> <li>• <i>What policy actors, interest groups, or institutions were involved in placing cyber-bullying on your policy agenda</i></li> <li>• <i>How did your division define the issue of cyber-bullying?</i></li> <li>• <i>What policy actors, interest groups, or institutions were involved in defining the issue of cyber-bullying?</i></li> <li>• <i>What resources were used to assist your understanding and definition of cyber-bullying?</i></li> <li>• <i>What process was used to form your local definition of cyber-bullying?</i></li> </ul>
Analysis of policy adoption	<p><b>Research Question:</b> How did the school division utilize the policy adoption stage to guide their development of a cyber-bullying policy?</p> <p>Interview Questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>When did you begin deliberating possible cyber-bullying policy alternatives?</i></li> <li>• <i>What were the various cyber-bullying policy alternatives identified?</i></li> <li>• <i>What policy actors, interest groups, and institutions were involved in influencing the list of cyber-bullying policy alternatives?</i></li> <li>• <i>What process was used to identify all the possible policy alternatives for cyber-bullying?</i></li> <li>• <i>What limitations were identified in tackling the issue of cyber-bullying at the local level?</i></li> <li>• <i>What resources were utilized to assist your development of local policy alternatives for cyber-bullying?</i></li> <li>• <i>When was your local policy direction for the issue of cyber-bullying</i></li> </ul>

*formalized?*

- *What policy actors, interest groups, and institutions were involved in the policy selection process?*
- *Describe the process used for the final policy adoption and direction selected by your school division.*
- *What were the key features of the cyber-bullying policy making process in your school division?*
- *What were the key criteria for policy selection?*

**Aims:** This part of the interview protocol aims at providing a local policy history of *cyber-bullying* (why was the policy made and when it was made?); an account of the changing political and social trends related to the policy direction being studied, a profile of the process through which the policy was made, the main policy actors involved, and the core beliefs that shaped the policy on cyber-bullying.

Analysis of  
policy  
implementation  
process

**Research Question:** What were the key features of the implementation process put in place to facilitate the execution of the cyber-bullying policy?

Interview Questions:

- *When did your division actively engage in policy implementation that addressed cyber-bullying?*
- *What policy actors, interest groups, and institutions were involved in implementing the local policy for cyber-bullying?*
- *How did you define the roles of division personnel and community members in preventing events of cyber-bullying?*
- *How did you define the roles of division personnel and community members in responding to events of cyber-bullying?*
- *What type of procedures and processes does your local policy identify to aid in the prevention of cyber-bullying?*
- *What type of procedures and processes does your local policy identify to guide response to incidences of cyber-bullying?*
- *In what ways do you communicate your cyber-bullying policy direction to those within your school division community?*
- *What were the key features of the implementation process utilized to support your local policy direction for the issue of cyber-bullying?*
- *What resistance was encountered to the implementation of your local cyber-bullying policy direction?*

**Aims:** The intent of this part of the interview protocol was to provide insights into the process and the extent to which the policy direction under study have been translated into policy actions and practices at the division and school level.

Analysis of  
policy impacts

**Research Question:** What are the perceived impacts of the local policy for cyber-bullying?

Interview Questions:

- *Have you had an opportunity to formally evaluate your local policy direction for cyber-bullying?*
- *How were the perceived transformations associated with the implementation of the policy on cyber-bullying experienced by the policy actors, interest groups, and institutions involved in the process?*
- *What were the perceived impacts of cyber-bullying policy implementation in your division in terms of school governance procedures, adaptations to course curriculum, and parental involvement in the pursuit of policy goals?*
- *Did you notice a decrease of cyber-bullying incidents in your school division? Do you attribute the perceived decrease to the implementation of the policy?*

**Aims:** The aims of this research phase are to reveal changes in the behavior and/or practices of school divisions and school-based administrative, support and teaching staff and of individuals (parents, students) and community-based organization directly impacted by the policy.

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## Data Analysis

Data analysis was accomplished using techniques developed by Miles and Huberman (1994). An explanatory coding structure was generated to inform and shape developing theory to make sense of the data. All data collected was coded into one of four broad categories: policy origin, policy adoption, policy implementation, or perceived policy impacts. The policy origin category reflected the manner in which cyber-bullying became part of the policy agenda. Information that reflected the process through which cyber-bullying was defined and the selection of a corresponding solution (policy) was grouped within the category of policy adoption. Information gathered that reflected how the chosen cyber-bullying policy was put into effect was grouped to reflect policy

implementation. The perceived policy impacts category encompassed all data that reflected the seeming effects of the cyber-bullying policy by the originating education policy actors and institutions directly involved in the policy process. From the grouping of the data into categories I developed within-site and cross-site matrices to display the data (see Table 6).

**Table 6**

*Generic Analytic Codes*

Stages of Policy Cycle	Analytic Codes
Policy origins and development process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policy history: past policies, legislation, catalytic events, etc</li> <li>• Social and political framework and trends</li> <li>• Key political actors at play</li> <li>• Policy language that shaped the policy</li> <li>• Aims and motives behind the policy direction</li> <li>• Processes through which the policy was developed</li> </ul>
Policy implementation by school division	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Model of implementation used to put the policy in place</li> <li>• Interpretation of the policy by implementing agencies.</li> <li>• Agents of change and of resistance</li> <li>• Translation of the policy into action</li> </ul>
Policy impacts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interpretation of transformations associated with policy implementation</li> <li>• Perceived changes in behaviors and practices due to policy implementation</li> </ul>

The focal point of the research was on the stage of policy origins and development with consideration made toward the impacts of the perceived policy impacts by those implementing the policy. The analysis of data was focused on establishing a policy history that reflected the introduction of division policy direction for cyber-bullying. Varying reasons for policy initiation are often a matter of different perceptions on the part of the main policy actors, and provide a rich text for policy analysis.

At the policy implementation stage, the data analysis was focused on the ways that the policy was put in place, the degree to which people understood the policy, the level of commitment to it by relevant actors within participating school division, and the policy levers and instruments used to put the policy into operation.

At the policy-impacts stage, the data was analyzed in terms of the policy's perceived impacts (changes) on implementing schools.

### **Summary**

Through the use an exploratory, explanatory, and descriptive case study research method, I intended to gain an understanding of the influencing factors affecting policy actors and institutions and of the actual policy process utilized by a Saskatchewan school division in developing a cyber-bullying policy. By engaging participants from the division and school levels through semi-structured interviews and artifact analysis, I collected data with the intent that the data would meet reliability and validity expectations for educational research. Throughout the investigation I made every attempt to minimize the risk for participants and organizations engaged in the study. With research methodology that was based on information gathered during a detailed literature

review, I was able to successfully collect and analyze data based on the four coding foci of policy origin, policy adoption, policy implementation, and perceived policy impacts.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS**

The focus of this research was to investigate the policy process utilized by a Saskatchewan school division to address the issue of cyber-bullying. This chapter provides a description of the participants in the study and the policy process utilized in the formation of a policy that addresses the concept of cyber-bullying. The first section of this chapter describes the school division utilized for this case study, participants interviewed who were directly involved in the division policy formation, and a brief history of the division Anti-bullying Policy previous to the addition of a cyber-bullying component. The second part of this chapter presents the accounts of the cyber-bullying policy development, organized by policy cycle categories, as recalled by the interview participants.

#### **Case Study Description**

This study involved an investigation of one Saskatchewan school division's policy response to the issue of cyber-bullying. While every effort was made to protect the anonymity of the participating school division, and the individuals who engaged in the interview process, a description of the school division and those interviewed has been provided in this section.

#### **School Division**

In January 2008 I surveyed the on-line administrative manuals of policies, regulations, and procedures from the home websites of Saskatchewan school divisions,

finding only two divisions that specifically referenced electronic or cyber-bullying. I chose to approach the division that was most geographically accessible in order to increase flexibility and opportunities for organizing interview times with participants in the case study. The division chosen for the case study was in an area that easily supported communications between students by ICT devices and computers, both on and off campus 24 hours a day. There were over 35 schools in this division, with an approximate 83% to 17% split of elementary schools to high schools respectively. Each school in the division provided an opportunity for student access to computers on campus, both during class and free time (i.e. before and after school, as well as during lunch time). None of the schools banned ICT devices from school property, some schools accepted the devices on school property with the expectation that the ICT's would be shut off and hidden from sight during school hours, other schools allowed the devices to be utilized on campus but not during a student's class time, and a few schools didn't have official guidelines for ICT devices as the need for such a policy had not arisen at that time.

### **Interview Subjects**

Upon division approval to participate in the case study research, I was provided with five names of division employees that were viewed by the division as those most knowledgeable of, and responsible for, the development of a division Anti-bullying Policy that included electronic-bullying. Each of the five people eagerly provided consent to participate as interview subjects in the case study. At the onset of each independent interview the subjects was asked to outline their role in the policy



development and their job title at the time of policy development. In effort to protect the anonymity of the school division and the interview participants, pseudonyms were used.

*Kennedy* was a principle on assignment at the time of policy development and has since been promoted to division Superintendent of Education with responsibilities of Special Education and a portion of Curriculum Instruction. The role played by Kennedy in the policy development was that of a person who “completed a good deal of background work regarding consultations”.

*Courtney* was a coordinator for student services in the division. Courtney was described as playing a pivotal role in policy development as a researcher and someone who was “very up to date regarding the research and trends of bullying”.

*Pat* was a division social worker. Pat was considered “a wealth of information on both the process then, and the present state of affairs, regarding bullying”.

*Drew* was an elementary school Principal in the division. Drew was regarded as “very well versed on the topic of bullying” and was valued for the ability to provide a “present reality” around the issue of traditional bullying and cyber-bullying within the school setting.

*Kim* was an elementary school Principal in the division during the policy development and, at the time of the interviews, was the “chairperson of the division’s Safe and Respectful Schools Committee which served as an oversight committee to the work of the smaller committee” charged with the responsibility of addressing the issue of cyber-bullying and policy development.

These five people (Kennedy, Courtney, Pat, Drew, and Kim) were all members of the division Safe and Respectful Schools committee who created the smaller committee that was formed in the spring of 2005 to spearhead the development of a division Anti-bullying Policy. The division Anti-bullying Policy was implemented in the 2004-2005 school year without specifically mentioning cyber-bullying. In the fall of 2005 cyber-bullying had become more of a salient issue in the division than it had been during the Anti-bullying Policy development timeframe and the committee was being approached by division stakeholders requesting the policy be revisited and revised to include the concept of cyber-bullying.

### **Previous Anti-Bullying Policy History**

Each of the interview participants identified the Provincial Government as the primary influence for formally placing bullying on the division's policy agenda. In the interviews, the data revealed that in February of 2005 Andrew Thomson, the Minister of Learning, directed all school divisions to develop an Anti-bullying Policy by the completion of the 2005-2006 school year. While it was acknowledged division and school personnel responded accordingly to incidences of bullying, they may not have completed a formal bullying policy document. Kennedy stated that "a critical incident sparked tons of media interest in this area and the Minister had a particular idea in his head that policy, a blanket policy across the province, would be a way to react to one critical incident; so there was a mandate [Kn. p.1 A10]." The interview with Pat suggested that the Minister of Learning provided direction for the Anti-bullying Policy when he called for "a Province wide anti-bullying strategy to insure that all schools and

school divisions in Saskatchewan had policies and practices in place to prevent bullying and promote caring, respectful, and safe school environments [P. p.1 A3].” In September of 2006 the Ministry of Learning provided all divisions with the document *Caring and Respectful Schools: Bullying Prevention. A Model Policy* to assist the development of anti-bullying policies for the various divisions. This model policy offered the divisions some sample language in defining the concept of bullying, it reads:

Bullying is a form of aggressive behavior that is repeatedly directed at an individual or group from a position of relative power. Bullying behavior can take many forms. It can be physical (e.g., hitting, pushing, tripping), verbal (e.g., name calling, insults, put downs), social (e.g., social isolation, gossip) or cyber (e.g., threats, insults or harmful messages spread through the internet). Bullying can be direct, “in your face” confrontation, or indirect, “behind your back”, such as spreading rumors. Bullying can be done by one person or by a group. A child or young person being bullied feels helpless in trying to stop it. A student is bullied or harassed when he or she is intentionally and repeatedly the target of the negative action of a stronger or more powerful person or group that cause fear, emotional stress and/or physical harm. p.6

The division director asked the Safe and Respectful Schools committee to develop an Anti-bullying Policy. A group of volunteers from the division Safe and Respectful Schools committee comprised of division personnel and principals took on the task to develop the division Anti-bullying Policy. The interview data suggested that, in their initial Anti-bullying Policy document, the division participating in the research didn’t focus much on the issue of cyber-bullying. Pat stated “I don’t believe there was a specific direction [to include cyber-bullying] to school divisions in terms of what must be in the policy, per se, other than there must be an Anti-bullying Policy in every school division and in fact every school [P. p.1 A3].”

For the original Anti-bullying Policy development, the division utilized a variety of resources to aid the overall policy development and the definition of bullying. The resources included sample provincial and national policies; focus groups at the community, school, parent, and student levels; written work of experts in the field of bullying; as well as those identified by Pat as “Saskatoon Police Services, School Resource Officers, some non-profit organizations, Health, Justice, [and the Saskatchewan Department of Learning] [P.p.1 A8].” Filled with the knowledge gained from these resources the committee engaged in round table discussions to come to a common understanding of the issue of bullying and form a preferred policy direction. The initial division Anti-bullying Policy was approved by the division School Board and dispersed to schools June 30, 2005, it stated:

A student is bullied when he or she is repeatedly exposed to negative actions on the part of one or more students causing emotional, psychological, and/or physical harm. These negative actions are intentional and hurtful. Bullying can be verbal, physical, and reactive. Bullying involves an imbalance of power, creates fear, and is not gender specific.

The 2004-2005 school year timeframe seemed to be early days concerning the use of communication technologies amongst students in this division and therefore at that time cyber-bullying did not appear to be a salient issue, in terms of policy development, to any of the interview participants. Drew stated that “Cyber-bullying wasn’t on [the agenda] in the very beginning. When we first talked about the whole policy and what the policy looked like we specifically decided not to include [cyber-bullying] as a separate topic. [We recognized our newly developed Anti-bullying Policy] encompassed bullying

and that cyber-bullying were included within [the overall policy] [D. p.1 A2].” The division Anti-bullying Policy was created with the intention that the policy would provide direction and boundaries for each school, with the intent that each school would have the freedom to create an Anti-bullying Policy (within the boundaries of the division policy) that best fit the needs of their unique community. It wasn’t until the 2005-2006 school year policy review process that cyber-bullying was placed onto the divisions policy agenda as a specific form of bullying.

### **Accounts of Cyber-bullying Policy Development**

With an understanding that the participating school division had previously developed and implemented a division Anti-bullying policy, this section describes the events that led up to and followed the inclusion of cyber-bullying as a policy issue prior to July 2009.

### **Categories from the Interview Data**

In analyzing the interview data four categories materialized, regarding the policy cycle that was presented in this chapter. The four categories were: policy origin, policy adoption, policy implementation, and perceived policy impact.

**Policy origin.** During the first year of division Anti-bullying Policy implementation, the student culture had changed quickly to include a greater number of student participants and variety of technology driven communication tools such as email, social networking sites, mobile phones, interactive on-line games, student developed web pages, and other digital technologies. It was during this time that the division appeared to

gain a practical understanding of the ever increasing ways students were, or could be, using a variety of new technological communication tools in positive and negative ways. According to Kennedy, they realized that there was “a significant potential issue here that we need to show some leadership and give some direction to the school based staff . . . because of all of the potential damage that can come from this [Kn. p.1 A3].” In fact, it was the division Safe and Respectful Schools Committee that, as Courtney put it, “[recognized] the policy needed direction as to what cyber-bullying was [C. p.1 A10].” The division Safe and Respectful Schools Committee placed cyber-bullying onto the policy agenda because, as said by Kennedy, “we heard from our school base that this is an issue, and through research, and continued reading from our division office . . . [indicating] that this was an issue that we needed to pay attention to [Kn. p.1 A2].”

Each of the interview participants acknowledged that during this time period there was an exponential growth concerning student use of electronic communications and school administrators were among the first to witness the effects of this paradigm shift in student communications. Drew shared that compared to when the policy was created “cyber-bullying has grown by leaps and bounds” [D. p.2 A13]. Shortly after this shift the issue of cyber-bullying began to gain issue saliency for school administrators. Drew acknowledged that in the 2005-2006 school years cyber-bullying was identified as a relevant issue due more to “adults being aware of it instead of students coming to school and complaining about it or being concerned about it [D. p.1 A2].” While there appeared to be an understanding by the participants that not all cyber-bullying incidences were brought to the school’s attention, they were aware that the number of cyber-bullying

events being reported to school administration had increased since their revised policy was implemented. Drew offered that during the time of the original policy implantation in the 2004-2005 school years “there were some incidences of cyber-bullying but nowhere near what we’re seeing now [D. p.1 A2].”

Each of the interview participants agreed that cyber-bullying had become an issue, in some capacity, in all of their buildings. Kennedy relayed that electronic-bullying can be performed using an ever increasing number of technological communication methods, and identified that “we’re struggling to keep up with it . . . I think it happens far more than is ever reported. I think staff, me included, doesn’t really understand the new technologies, how everything works, or the potential that exists with these technologies for cyber-bullying [Kn. p.1 A3].” Kennedy also identified that the scope in which electronic or cyber-bullying was or could be occurring between students was a vague concept for staff members in the division community. Kim agreed that cyber-bullying was definitely happening within the division community but thought it was not originating on school property, “it is happing outside the school but students are bringing these issues to the school, as a result you can’t separate it, it comes together [K. p.1 A6].” It seemed to be the general consensus from the interview data that cyber-bullying was not being performed or accessed while students were on campus, but rather it was the fall-out of off-campus cyber-bullying that was being played out on campus and that was how the issue of cyber-bullying was being brought to the attention of administrators. In Kim’s experience, “it is not happening at school, I believe it is removed from the school, it’s happening outside the school and the impact is certainly

happening at the school level because the cyber-bullying is happening at home [K. p.1 A6].” Courtney appeared to agree with the perspective of both Pat and Kim, stating “if we’re going to get a handle on the serious harassment that can be happening we have to inform and educate the community . . . [w]e can’t assume that the school will know [cyber-bullying] is occurring and will respond, the community needs to take some responsibility. If we think the school alone is going to fix it we are dead in the water [C. p.1 A8].” It is apparent from the data that it is the belief of the interview participants that electronic-bullying is a community issue and that including the concept of cyber-bullying in the division Anti-bullying Policy was just one aspect of how schools can assist the community in dealing with the issue of cyber-bullying.

**Policy adoption.** In 2005 there had become a need for schools to respond to issues of cyber-bullying and the division Anti-bullying Committee acknowledged the issue required their acknowledgement and their direction for schools in responding to it. Schools were providing feedback to the division Anti-bullying Policy Committee that a cyber-component was missing in the policy. Kennedy had indicated by the 2005-2006 school year, when schools were developing local policy under the umbrella of the initial division policy, “some schools [had] actually . . . included electronic-bullying or cyber-bullying into their school level policies even in the absence of it being in the division policy [Kn. p.2 A12].” Due to local school policy development and dialogue, as well as the trends present in the research they had continued to review, the division Safe and Respectful Schools Committee came to realize that this form of bullying was “glaring in its absence from the division standpoint . . . what we were hearing from the schools



painted a pretty clear picture that it was an element that needed to be front and center” according to Kennedy [Kn. p.2 A12 & A20]. Looking back to how cyber-bullying was addressed in the division’s original Anti-bullying Policy document the division Safe and Respectful Schools Committee identified the issue of cyber-bullying needed to be reviewed and discussed further. Courtney indicated that “[i]nitially we had [identified both] physical and verbal [bullying] in our original Anti-bullying Policy and [cyber-bullying] was kind of imbedded within the verbal bullying. The number of times and situations where school administrators were involved in responding to some serious issues . . . prompted us to move to explicitly define and include electronic-bullying as its own category [C. p.1 A2].” The division Safe and Respectful Schools committee realized that there was a missing piece to their Anti-bullying Policy in that cyber-bullying needed to be more clearly represented with the policy.

Although during the initial division Anti-bullying Policy development a variety of resources and stakeholders were utilized to aid the overall policy development and the definition of bullying, the division Anti-bullying Policy Committee (hereafter to be known as ‘the division Policy Committee’) acknowledged such a process was not required for an amendment to identify another form of bullying. As the division Policy Committee reviewed the inclusion of cyber-bullying as a specific form of bullying in the revised policy, they decided they would come to an understanding of the concept of cyber-bullying and incorporate it into the amended policy using their own efforts. Kim recalled “it was mainly this committee that came together to share the information and create the [amended] policy . . . we spent a lot of time sharing ideas and writing it

together [K. p.2 A18].” Neither schools, parents, students, nor other interest groups were directly involved in the formal amendment to the original Anti-bullying Policy to include the concept of cyber-bullying. As Courtney agreed that it was the division Anti-bullying Committee that would be the primary source for the cyber-bullying amendment [C. p.2 A20]. Kennedy expressed the involvement of stakeholders outside the division Policy Committee were not formally involved in the amendment process as “it was through the development of the policy at the school level that we got feedback about that piece and at every level there was parental engagement in their policy development so [indirectly] yes, but formally to the committee . . . no [Kn. p.2 A15].” Drew explained that every school was engaging in focus groups, performing research, and creating policy under the guidance of a local (school) Safe and Respectful School Committee (hereafter to be known as ‘local Policy Committee’) comprised primarily of “parents, students and staff [D. p.2 A19].” Pat also painted the picture that local Policy Committees had passed on information to the division Policy Committee that was gathered during “forums, public consultations, [meetings] with their stakeholders and their community people and their parents [P. p.2 A28].” Although the division personnel did not assist in school (local) policy selection they did attend some local forums and consultations, and actively sought out and accepted feedback from the local Policy Committees.

After the decision was made by the division Policy Committee that there was a need to include the concept of cyber-bullying into the division Anti-bullying Policy, the division Policy Committee (composed of some division personnel and some school principals) asked for two volunteers to come up with some policy language that would

suitably meet the needs of the division community by framing the issue of bullying as well as addressing the issue of cyber-bullying. Kim and Drew volunteered to form the sub-committee responsible to create the sample policy language that would then be brought back to the division Policy Committee for discussion, revision, and policy language selection based on committee consensus. The duo utilized research articles, sample and model anti-bullying policies from the national, provincial, and local levels. Kim indicated that based on their research they thought the division policy language should not include a separate section focused on cyber-bullying or electronic-bullying but have a policy that “was all encompassing . . . and within the definition, electronic-bullying [would] be identified but [not] a focus [K. p.2 A15].” Drew recalled there was “a great deal of discussion at the beginning . . . I remember the comment was made that if we included cyber-bullying [separately in the policy] then we had to include all of the other kinds of bullying; . . . cyber-bullying became a form of bullying just like the other ones . . . electronic-bullying was determined to be part of the larger bullying definition [D. p.1 A11 & p.2 A12].” Kim and Drew returned to the division Policy Committee with the recommendation that total revision of the division Anti-bullying Policy was unnecessary and that redefining bullying to include the concept of cyber-bullying or electronic-bullying would meet their needs for a more inclusive policy. The Anti-bullying Policy committee supported the recommendation as demonstrated by Kennedy’s statement that “putting cyber-bullying as its own subset of policy . . . didn’t seem well aligned to take a piece out and deal with it differently . . . [cyber-bullying] may look different [than traditional bullying] but the root issues are the same . . . we just found

there wasn't enough difference in what we would do [as an intervention] to put cyber-bullying as a separate policy [Kn. p.2 A16]." Courtney expressed that the committee saw value in "[wanting] it to be within the umbrella of the Anti-bullying Policy [C. p.2 A17]."

In their discussions, the division Policy Committee debated between the use of the term cyber-bullying or the term electronic-bullying. Pat indicated that the committee "wanted to keep [the policy] broad in order to allow for future electronic devices and communication methods to be kept within the fold of the term . . . there was an acknowledgement that this was an area that was going to grow and if we had. . . [specified] one form of technology" it would have limited the policy to technologies in existence and in trend at that time [P. p.2 A 23 & 34]. In the end the division Policy Committee came to a consensus that electronic-bullying would be the term used in their policy definition of bullying. The division Policy Committee communicated that the term electronic-bullying best suited the division's Anti-bullying Policy needs after reviewing literature from prominent researchers in the cyber-bullying field such as Hinduja & Patchin and Rob Nickel, considering how media was portraying and defining the issue of cyber-bullying, weighing the opinions and viewpoints of the general public in terms of experience involving cyber-bullying, educating themselves through workshops and seminars dealing with the concept of cyber-bullying, and as Kim put it "discussions around what we thought electronic-bullying was and how it impacted kids [K. p.1 A10]."

After this process the division Policy Committee came to a consensus that electronic-bullying, rather than cyber-bullying, was the most suitable term to use in the amendment division Anti-bullying Policy.

The division Policy Committee wanted the policy to be written in a way that that made sense for their community and they wanted it to be concise. Courtney indicated the group was thoughtful in their policy choice “because we wanted people to read it . . . we didn’t want it to be pages and pages and of course we wanted to be able to give some direction [C. p.1 A15].” Kennedy shared that a “term like electronic would be freeing rather than restricting . . . that’s always the balance in policy development, to write it in such a way that there’s enough direction but that it also provides some flexibility, or some way to interpret that policy, to reflect the needs of the local community [Kn. p.1 A8].”

The division Policy Committee viewed electronic-bullying to be more freeing as a policy term than cyber-bullying in that the term electronic encompassed more communication tools than just the use of a computer. Courtney indicated that the committee wanted to “take into consideration taking a picture with a cell phone and loading it up on a computer . . . the misuse of cell phones and all of that texting kind of stuff . . . [and] define it in a way that as new forms of media comes to existence” they would be covered under the use of the term electronic-bullying [C. p.1 A11]. Kim offered “we kept the electronic term . . . certainly we did have some discussion around what we thought electronic-bullying was all about . . .but I can honestly say we didn’t come up with a formal definition of electronic-bullying or cyber-bullying [K. p.2 A13].” The final amended bullying definition for the Anti-bullying Policy of October 3, 2005 was still used as the division policy at the time of completion for this research, and it reads:

A student is bullied when he or she is repeatedly exposed to negative actions on the part of one or more students causing emotional, psychological, and/or physical harm. These negative actions are intentional and hurtful. Bullying can be verbal, physical, electronic, relational, and reactive. Bullying involves an imbalance of power, creates fear, and is not gender specific.

However, there was no formal guidance provided to schools, from neither the government nor the school division, specifically on the topic of cyber- or electronic-bullying with regard to scope, response, or prevention. “It is not in the school division [Anti-bullying] Policy . . . the sort of action to take per se . . . I believe in [each school Anti-bullying Policy] there are more specifics in terms of responses” said Pat in answer to whether or not the division provided guidance to school administration on the understanding of electronic-bullying and how to specifically respond to incidences of electronic-bullying [P. p.2 A19].

The division Policy Committee identified the structure of the original Anti-bullying Policy had effectively met the needs of the division, with the exception of not including electronic-bullying within its definition of bullying. Courtney remembered that the division Policy Committee “wanted to be true to not starting from scratch and doing it all over again . . . you know some schools hadn’t totally got their first policy done yet . . . we needed to provide some direction that they [would] be able to implement [C. p.2 A18].” With this in mind, the division Policy Committee decided not to alter any structural parts, or framework, of the Anti-bullying Policy once the definition of bullying had been revised. They held to the belief that the division did not need a blanket policy for all schools to follow, but rather provide a division policy to set the boundaries for schools to create local Anti-bullying Policy that meets the unique needs of its community.

According to Kim “the division policy was left somewhat general to allow for . . . scope and sequence for each individual school” so that the communities’ needs are met [K. p.2 A12]. Schools were encouraged to work through a development process similar to that of the division development process with a final policy formed based on consultations, review of research literature, professional development, and with the focus of the best practice for students. “Based on the direction [from the division and from the Ministry], once we had [developed] division policy . . . there was the directive for each and every school [to develop] their own policy, meeting the needs of their own community [K. p.2 A12].” Kennedy explained having schools go through the process of forming their own policies is a valuable experience as “the process is probably more important than the product in policy development, so the process by which every community needed to go through to deal with this was more important than actually what the words were on the page at the end [Kn. p.2 A14].” Pat identified that “there was a whole education piece that happened around schools when developing their own policy . . . and the process that happened with that [P. p.2 A28].” Pat relayed that “there was a real desire not to direct schools as to what their policy was going to look like or how it was going to be written . . . there was a real acknowledgement [from the Minister] that schools needed autonomy in terms of developing their own policy [P. p.2 A28].”

Schools were required to submit their local (school) Anti-bullying Policy to the division office to be placed in a binder, where it may or may not be reviewed. “Once each school had gone through their [policy] process their policies were submitted to the board office and reviewed” said Pat [P. p.2 A28]. Courtney stated that “each school’s

policy wasn't vetted or approved at the Board level . . . [the schools] were required to submit their policy to the board office . . . there was some kind of monitoring [for completion and] a little bit about quality [C. p.2 A21].” Drew explained that it was the responsibility of the division Safe and Respectful Schools committee to “ensure [all schools submitted a local Anti-bullying Policy], we collected them and we [stored] them in a binder [at the division office] . . . these were submitted for information sake not approval [D. p.2 A18].” Courtney did indicate that a unit superintendent could have a conversation with a school if they recognized the policy was incomplete or unclear. Schools were required to utilize a division incident report form upon incidences of bullying, and directed schools to maintain and secure these records within the school office.

Principals were provided the freedom to respond to incidences of bullying at the local level with the responsibility to follow the integrity of the policy and the knowledge that the division was to be kept informed of any serious event(s). Kim expressed that division principals were informed that they needed to “make a decision in terms of is this a situation that warrants a bullying incident report to be filled out, and if so we needed to do it . . . [and it was] expected to keep the report at the school level [K. p.3 A28].” Drew explained that teachers had the responsibility to inform principals of bullying incidences. Both Kennedy and Drew identified the overall response to all bullying events to be, the incident is investigated, evidence is gathered to determine if it was truly a bullying event or that of a conflict event, principals would assess if a report should be filled out, parents are informed, and consequences for bullying behavior would be administered in the same



manner regardless if it was traditional or electronic-bullying. All of the interview participants clearly expressed that each school in the division received the message that every incident of bullying must be investigated and responded to when brought to the attention of school staff. When an incident of electronic-bullying occurs, Pat explained there are some differences from traditional bullying for schools to consider. Pat stated that in an electronic-bullying situation “sometimes we need consultation with police, sometimes legal consultation . . . most principals when they are unsure [of their jurisdiction, how to investigate, or how to respond] would consult with their unit superintendent and, or, their resource officer [or] perhaps their school liaison officer [P. p.3 A41].” Courtney mirrored Pats comments concerning involving police and legal resources when responding to possible electronic-bullying events, as the events could be illegal, and also added that principals may also involve school counselors or social workers.

Each of the interview participants indicated there was an expectation for an annual review of the policy at the division, performed at the annual Principal’s forum, and local levels which involved a reading of the policy, with the school’s community and stakeholders, followed by an evaluation if alterations need to be made. In the event no alterations were deemed necessary the policy remained in status quo, however, if alterations were made to the policy the amended policy would be distributed to the schools if the division policy was changed, and amended school policies would be submitted to the division Safe and Respectful Schools committee to be placed in the appropriate file.

**Policy implementation.** Once the revised division Anti-bullying policy that included electronic-bullying was ratified by the School Board on October 3, 2005 the policy implementation occurred on two levels, the division level and the school level.

At the division level the policy was shared with the division staff and posted on the division website as an effort to inform their community. Courtney indicated that some school websites included a link to the division Anti-bullying Policy document to support the schools local policy. Drew explained that the division Safe and Respectful Schools committee presented the Anti-bullying Policy to the division Principal's Association and assisted the principals in presenting the policy to local staff prior to the electronic-bullying amendment, but were only involved after the revision at the local (school) level presentations upon administrator request. Division personnel saw it as vital to the success of the Anti-bullying Policy that a partnership form between schools, students, parents, institutions, community, and division office in the offense against bullying. Drew indicated "there was all kinds of support provided [to the schools]" during the policy development process, "as committee members we would [attend local meetings and focus groups] . . . Kennedy and Courtney were always available to be consulted" and informal discussions occurred during principal meetings [D. p.2 A19].

Courtney and Pat were promoted in the division as support resources for schools to help inform local communities on the policy and to assist schools in creating safe, positive, and caring environments. It was expressed by Courtney that the division "didn't do well" in implementing the division policy, stating "we were focused on just the addressing [the concept of electronic-bullying] . . . beyond being a policy that you can

access and read about on the website, I don't think we did anything significant to implement it" beyond providing support to schools upon request and making resources available to schools ". . . we didn't do anything consistently, broad based" [C. p.3 A23]. Outside of identifying electronic-bullying as a form of bullying, the interview participants all indicated that there were no specific policy directive from the division as to its definition to help explain exactly what it is or the forms it might be manifested in. Kennedy feels "there are still many communities that are largely unaware or continue to need support and understanding with the implementation component of electronic-bullying and getting into the electronic-bullying component [Kn. p.3 A32]."

While the division didn't do anything specific to implement the electronic-bullying component of the policy, they did develop an anti-bullying resource kit for elementary schools that included the concept of cyber-bullying for schools and classroom teachers to use. Pat identified that resources were developed as "anti-bullying supports for education and programming in the schools" which, lately, includes "resources kits specific to cyber-bullying" [P. p.3 A46]. Kim explained that the division Safe and Respectful Schools committee sought out resources and developed programs as educational pieces to support schools in educating and informing their communities on the issue of bullying, which indirectly had connections to the concept of electronic-bullying within the larger concept of relational aggression. These resources included commercial social skills programs such as Second Step and Skills for Adolescents.

Specific role definitions for policy implementations were never identified but unit superintendents may ask principals for their local Anti-bullying Policy to ensure division

policy guidelines are met and that the local policy supports the educational and community values of the division. Principles are expected to respond to incidences of bullying and monitor such events. “As a school administrator, you are the one that is setting the procedures, guidelines and processes of how your school will respond to issues of electronic-bullying . . . [administrators] play a key leadership role with support and help from [their local] Safe and Respectful Schools committee within [their] own schools” said Kim [K. p.3 A30]. Kennedy expressed that the “electronic-bullying piece would have been after a lot of the work [for the original policy implementation] so our intent was that [the electronic-bullying component] would have been implemented by the principals back to their staff and their community after the amendment was done at the division level [Kn. p.3 A38].”

Parents and guardians were encouraged to assist in bullying prevention and monitoring efforts from home and keep active communications with the school. Kim pointed out it was the belief of the division Policy Committee that “parents are a vital component in [the collaboration process] to help support, define the issue, direct policy where to go, as well as supporting kids at home and reinforcing safety and security in the prevention of electronic-bullying on the home front [K. p.3 A26].” Kennedy indicated that without the support and involvement of parents on the issue of electronic-bullying it would be extremely difficult for schools to be aware of such events, let alone support students through the process. Pat expressed “as a school division, we can’t do this on our own . . . we are just one part of [the process] . . . we know we have to step to the plate and do our part in [providing the policy and support resources]” but the division Policy

Committee clearly identified there must be a collaborative effort with parents and other community stakeholders in dealing with the concept of electronic-bullying, and all other forms of bullying [P. p.3 A38].

The division did have some informal dialogue with school administration around legal implementations of electronic-bullying incidences and the response to such events but no formal policy guidance or information was provided to schools. Kennedy indicated that there had been some “recent dialogue with administrators around legal implications” of dealing with electronic-bullying but at that time there were no specific efforts to provide formal investigation or guidance from the division regarding legal implications for principals in responding to electronic-bullying [Kn. p.3 A34]. Kennedy further explained that at times bullying events, especially electronic-bullying, can have legal implications, and for those events principals “work very closely with city police services . . . there are times it is outside our realm and that’s where we support both city police services and our families [Kn. p.3 A36].” There have been electronic-bullying incidences in the division and according to Kennedy, “we bumped into a few things along the way where we needed some [legal] clarification” in dealing with the electronic-bullying event but “we are clearer now than before about where [our jurisdiction] begins and ends” [Kn. p.3 A34]. The gathering of situational knowledge concerning how to identify, respond to, and understand the legal implication surrounding issues of electronic-bullying are informally shared with, and among, school administrators during administrators meetings and informal communications.

It was identified by the interview participants that not many principals in the division had a firm grasp on the concept of electronic-bullying in terms of how to find out about it, how to respond to it, and the legal limitations of accessing events on technologies, as well as where the boundaries begin and end with concern to events that occur or originate off-campus. Courtney explained that when it came to the topic of electronic-bullying some principals in the division “are very knowledgeable and do a good job in terms of investigating [it], and then there are people that quite frankly can’t even use e-mail and don’t even want to go there because all of the problems it is going to bring and how they’re going to do this all by themselves [C. p.3 A29].” When discussing off-campus electronic-bullying, Kennedy indicated that one of the challenges for response was when it was occurring “between one of our students with a student from another school division . . . it is outside our jurisdiction . . . we help our student(s) and parents through the process” but in reality they feel that’s all they can do [Kn. p.3 A37]. When an incident occurs between students within the division Kennedy expressed that the school administration would “engage in that, in whatever capacity is appropriate [Kn. p.3 A37].” Kennedy further explained that at times the response may include City Police Services but most times it is resolved “within the context of the school [Kn. p.3 A37].” When asked about electronic-bullying that originates off-campus Kennedy said “it depends on how it looks in the school”, if students are accessing data or photos while on campus, “whether there is a fight at school because of the [electronic-bullying]”, or it results in “unwanted behavior at the school [like reduced attendance] . . . we see that it is impacting the school . . . that’s when we get engaged . . . if it is between two kids

[originating and occurring off-campus] and it has no bearing on the school then there is no jurisdiction [for the schools to respond]” [Kn. p.3 A37]. Each year the schools and the division informally review their Anti-bullying Policy to identify if there is a need to review or alter the policy, to date no revisions have been identified to the interview participants after the accepted October 3, 2005 policy.

Overall it was expressed by the interview participants that the division did not do a great job at implementing the policy. It is acknowledged that the division community lacked a common understanding of electronic-bullying, incidence reports are not completed well due to misunderstandings between bullying and conflict, and that not enough support has been provided to school administration for them to identify and respond to electronic-bullying, originating either on or off campus. Kim acknowledged “we haven’t as a school community identified if this happens between the hours of such’n’such is it something removed from the school and dealt with by parents outside the school versus when do we deal with it . . . when it is brought to our attention [K. p.3 A33]. When asked if it was perceived that school administrators understood their responsibilities and jurisdiction when responding to electronic-bullying events Pat stated “some would and some might not” [P. p.3 A41]. Courtney expressed “quite frankly, [school administrators] are individually kind of navigating [response to electronic-bullying] on their own [C. p.3 A31].” In reference to the use of incident reports for electronic-bullying events Courtney furthered with “because [school administrators] are all over the map in what their knowledge about this is, I think they are more likely to fill

the report in if [events have] moved to something physical, when it is really electronic-bullying [C. p.3 A30].”

The interview participants identified a possible reason for the short falls in policy implementation and perceived policy impact was due to the promotion of new division initiatives, such as effective evaluation, multiple curriculum revisions, literacy strategies, to name a few, leaving some of the implementation of the Anti-bullying Policy to fall through the cracks. Some of the interview participants [C., D., and K.] commented that the division implementation of the Anti-bullying Policy was very “piecemeal.” Courtney indicated that once the division policy was completed there was an “expectation that was communicated that you will implement and follow the policy, [with] the monitoring piece of that laid on the unit superintendents [C. p.3 A24].” Courtney continued with the statement “at that point [the division Safe and Respectful Schools committee was] shifting gears and moving more to other [division initiatives] . . . the [Anti-bullying Policy] implementation phase was pretty much dropped and [other division initiatives] became the prime responsibilities of the [division Safe and Responsible Schools committee] [C. p.3 A24].” This didn’t mean the Anti-bullying Policy was completely neglected, Courtney indicated that the division committee still continued to “build and add to resource kits . . . have Safe and Respectful Schools meetings with schools in the division about two or three times a year . . . share resources . . . and [celebrate] the kinds of things schools have done in the Anti-Bullying Week [C. p.3 A35].”

Implementation of the Anti-bullying Policy at the school level could look unique from school to school with their freedom to create a policy within division guidelines.



This resulted in differences in response consistency between schools but this was acceptable at the division level as long as the school met the needs of its community and operated within the boundaries and expectations set by the division policy. Each of the interview participants identified that schools presented their Anti-bullying policy to their communities through a variety of methods such as student handbooks (agendas), postings on school websites, articles in school newsletters, school assemblies, course outlines, parent information packages, parent meetings, and so on. While none of these methods specifically addressed the definition and explanation of electronic-bullying, the term was included as a type of bullying whenever the policy was shared. Some schools have utilized their police liaison as a resource to educate their students and school community on the use of the internet for bullying targets such as other students, community members, and school staff.

Kennedy indicated that one of the preventative measures resources provided to schools from the division committee was a list of good speakers they could enlist to help educate their local community on the occurrence and effect of bullying, with guidance on how to respond to such events. Specifically in reference to electronic-bullying, Kennedy indicated the City Police Services offered was an excellent resource for schools in that “they offered a number of resource presentations that a number of schools used both for students and for parents that worked specifically on the cyber-bullying component . . . they were quite helpful actually because parents needed to see a live demonstration of what [cyber-bullying] looked like [Kn. p.3 A32].” There are also some teachers who address electronic-bullying in their classroom.

While schools can look to prevent electronic-bullying (and other forms of bullying) through educating its entire community, the school relies on parents and other community stakeholders to play their vital role in partnership with the school and the division. Some schools have experienced resistance to the implementation of the Anti-bullying Policy by those parents calling for a zero-tolerance policy, but it was stated that best practice must preside and the schools continue to do their best in combatting all forms of bullying as outlined by the Anti-bullying Policy. Drew expressed that “the biggest stumbling block that I come across . . . is the parent that wants zero tolerance . . . they want the kids to hang from the flagpole . . . it is not necessarily that parents have resistance to a policy, it is that some parents may have felt the policy didn’t go far enough in disciplining the individuals [D. p.3 A32].” Kim shared “we are doing the best we can with the information that is being brought to our attention . . . I guess as an administrator and as a parent I am concerned about the fact that I think this is just the tip of the iceberg and there is so much more happening to our kids via electronic-bullying [K. p.3 A24].” Courtney pointed out “there are so many pressures on education today to be the answer for everything . . . the be all and end all to fix the brokenness in society . . . people are supervising but unless they actually watch or see when kids are [electronically communicating], where they are going [on computer sites] . . . it’s just so easy for it to be happening right in front of [the adults] [C. p.3 A29].” The participants all agreed that the minimal degree of understanding for most parents, and school staff, concerning how students electronically-communicate and their lack of experience with, and knowledge of, devices used for such communications can also be limiting in knowing the bullying is

occurring and responding to it. Courtney indicated some administrators identified that electronic-bullying “was an incident that was happening off-school or not on the school grounds but [it’s effect] was coming into the school” and there was a bit of resistance or uneasiness in responding to it due to the “challenge of investigating it”, the administrators “weren’t sure [they] wanted to get into the whole messy thing” [C. p.3 A39].

**Perceived policy impact.** While no formal Anti-bullying Policy evaluation was completed the interview participants were comfortable discussing their perceived policy impact. It was acknowledged that while there is an awareness of the Anti-bullying Policy within the community and that people have a better understanding of what traditional bullying is, the interview participants were not sure that the policy had made an impact. Drew identified that the impact of the amended Anti-bullying Policy was “more of awareness than anything else . . . I mean an awareness of the adults, not the kids . . . the community would probably have a better understanding of what it is and how it occurs and that it is important for them to tell us” when electronic-bullying, and all forms of bullying, are occurring [D. p.4 A36]. Drew furthered with, it “is more a result of people being aware we live in a world where this technology is coming and it’s taking over and we need to know what’s going on and we need to keep our students safe [D. p.4 A38].”

The interview participants seemed to agree that there is a wide range of understanding in division and school communities, including administration and staff, many do not have a clear understanding on what electronic-bullying is or what it can involve. It was expressed that a lot of electronic-bullying is happening that is never reported to parents, the school or division staff and therefore not a great deal of time has

been spent on electronic-bullying. Kim stated “when I look at our division definition of bullying . . . it does not, within the [definition or policy], speak to what we mean electronic-bullying to be [K. p.4 A37].” Drew shared “I don’t think the community has a really good understanding of how [electronic-bullying] is occurring . . . I think they just know that it occurs . . . they wouldn’t necessarily know the definition of cyber-bullying or electronic-bullying . . . they wouldn’t understand exactly what it was or what it all entails [D. p.4 A36].” Drew expressed contentment with the policy definition of bullying “because quite honestly it doesn’t matter how clear the definition is or how clear the policy itself is, [the policy will still be enforced and bullying incidences will be dealt with] . . . the policy is there to support you when you feel you need backing [D. p.4 A41 & 42].”

It was thought by the interview participants that some principals may informally review their incident report binders from time to time to get a sense of increased or decreased electronic-bullying behavior but there was little confidence in the reports distinguishing between traditional and electronic bullying, let alone on-campus and off-campus events. Pat stated “I don’t know that we could ever have accurate data on [the tracking of electronic-bullying incidences] . . . there are bullying incident reports collected but they are kept at the local school level . . . we don’t [collect the forms] at the division [P. p.4 A58].” Courtney indicated that she thought it would be “really difficult for the division to have a handle on” the division and school based conceptual understanding of electronic-bullying and the scope in which it occurs [C. p.4 A41]. The interview participants did not think the policy had reduced the number of reported

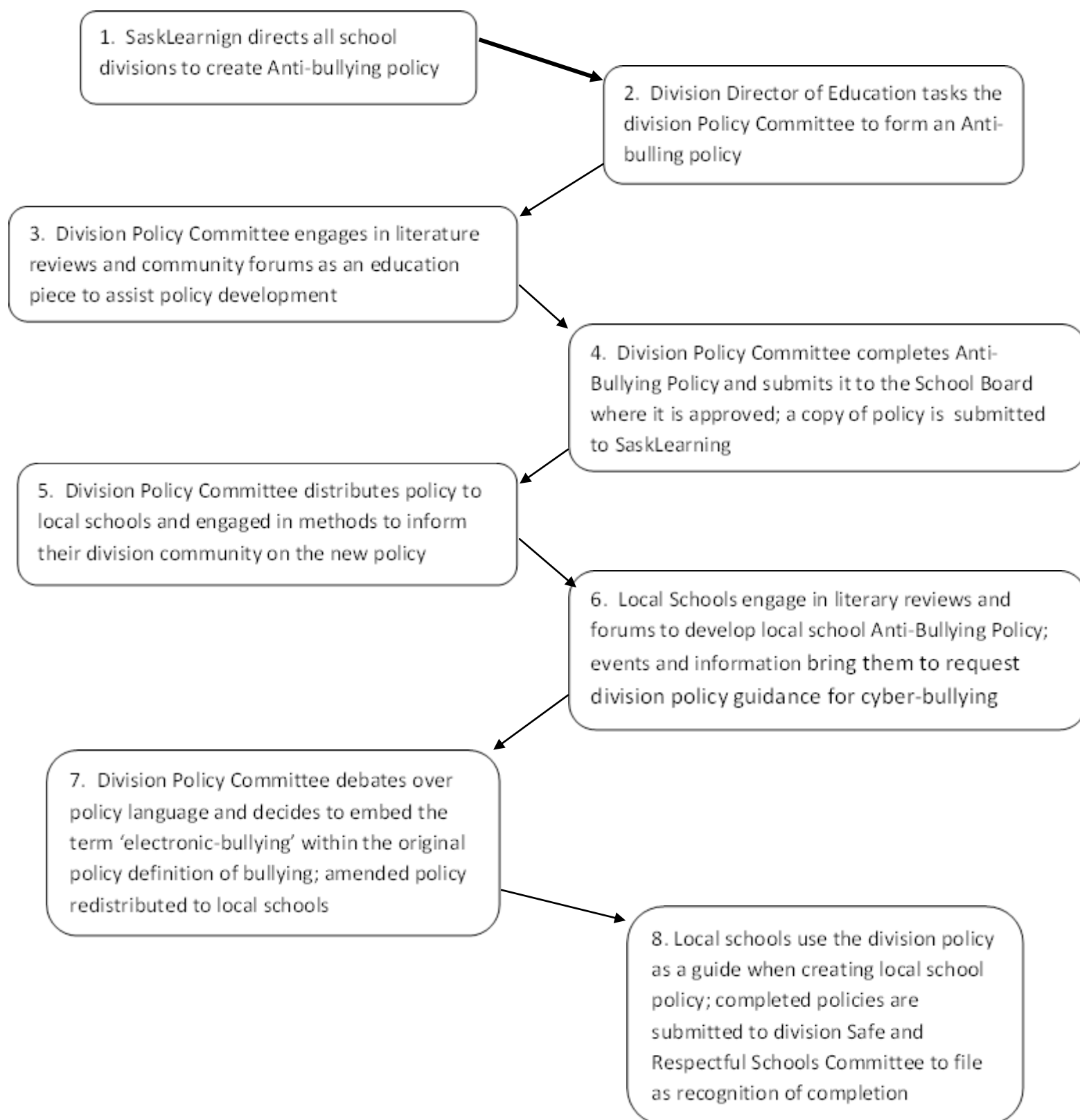
electronic-bullying incidences after two years of policy implementation and thought that the slight increase of events reported could be directly correlated to the increased number and variety of ICT devices used by students during the implementation time period.

It was expressed by the participants that a spike in documented events is expected when a new policy is put in place and that the increased enrolment, along with the explosion of technological methods that students were utilizing for communications, a slight increase in the amount of electronic-bullying data would be normal. Kim stated “these kids are wired, big time, differently than us and in today’s world of electronic [communications] my sense is that there is a lot of [electronic-bullying] going on at both the elementary and high school levels [K. p.4 A42].” Overall the interview participants acknowledged the combined number of electronic-bullying incidences in the school division had increased in the years since the amended policy was adopted. Courtney identified that the number of incidences of electronic-bullying was dependent on the make-up of school community and the prevention and explanation education piece put in place in that community. Drew indicated that there was a school bullying-incident log completed annually at Drew’s school to utilize as a method of comparing the number of reported bullying incidences from year to year. Drew stated this particular school community didn’t have “anywhere near the number of issues that a lot of other schools deal with on a regular basis [D. p.4 A34].”

The division Policy Committee expressed disappointment with the Ministry of Learning’s lack of continued support and guidance on bullying and electronic-bullying past their 2006 model Anti-bullying policy release. Courtney expressed “I’m really

disappointed quite frankly . . . I thought the Province showed very good leadership, expecting schools to articulate their policy . . . after the [Provincial] policy development the person who was in the lead position at the Ministry assumed another position of responsibility for other things . . . nobody replac[ed] him and it's not been a priority [C. p.1 A6].” Each of the participants identified the division Anti-bullying Policy to have good structure and content, it just needs to be communicated more effectively and more time needs to be put into understanding how technologies can be used to bully and the impacts of electronic-bullying on students, staff, administrators, families, etcetera in the school and division communities. Kim thought an analysis of the amended division Anti-bullying Policy would provide “valuable data to analyze and determine where we go from here [K. p.4 A33].” Courtney acknowledged that division Anti-bullying Policy development occurred just prior to the explosion of technological communications by students, “I don’t think [electronic-bullying] was understood . . . even to predict how it could become one of the primary types of bullying . . . [using] the multiple kinds of media” [C. p2. A18]. Kennedy shared “I think it is high time we formally evaluate the policy . . . numbers are only numbers though . . . we need to get into schools on this, on their own student climate surveys . . . some schools collected baseline data on whether students were feeling safe” that should have included information on the type and number of bullying incidences that were occurring “it would be nice to be able to view some of this data” [Kn. p.4 A40].

At the time of the interviews the division had contracted an independent researcher to review all division policies which may lead to an evaluation of the Anti-bullying Policy impact.

**Figure 5*****Sequence of Events Summary for Division Anti-bullying Policy Development***



### **Summary**

In this chapter, from a summary of the data collected through semi-structured interview and the inclusion of the voice of interview participants, I presented an account of the process utilized by a division to create a policy that addresses the concept of cyber-bullying. The data provided here were organized based on categories present in the policy cycle. In the next chapter I make connections between the data collected and the categories of the described policy cycle and make inferences from the data to answer the proposed research questions.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **CONNECTIONS AND CONCLUSIONS**

The purpose of my research was to analyze the process utilized by a Saskatchewan school division to create policy that addressed the issue of cyber-bullying. In this chapter, connections were made between the data collected from the semi-structured interviews with policy creators and the literary review content of the saliency of cyber-bullying issues for schools and the policy process cycle, presented in chapters one and two, respectfully.

#### **Implications of the Policy Process**

Information presented in this section was organized based on the proposed research questions that were designed to complement the chosen policy cycle of policy origin, policy adoption, policy implementation, and policy impact.

#### **Policy Origin**

##### **Research Question 1: What was the policy origin for the issue of cyber-bullying?**

Levin (2006) identified that policy agenda is limited by influence of party platforms, powerful stakeholders, political and institutional leaders, public discourse, and political commitments. Events of bullying in Saskatchewan schools resulted in media and the public asking the Saskatchewan government to respond with policy guidance for provincial school divisions. Schouwstra and Ellman (2006) expressed that important policy stakeholders hold the power to create policy windows to assist an identified issue in becoming a public issue. Prior to forming an official Anti-bullying policy this division did not shy away from responding to bullying issues, in any form, but it wasn't until an

influential stakeholder, SaskLearning, placed bullying on the agenda for all school divisions in the province of Saskatchewan that an official Anti-bullying policy was formed by this division. Drew stated “we had always been aware of the various types of bullying and we all had things we were doing in our schools [in prevention and response to bullying], but when SaskLearning came out with the document then we set out like every other school division in our province to create [an Anti-bullying Policy] for ourselves [D. p.1 A2].”

In the original division Anti-bullying policy the policy makers decided not to include a specific reference to cyber or electronic-bullying as it was understood by the committee that all forms of bullying would be implied by the use of the general term of bullying. Drew acknowledged that that the original policy “did have something in [there] on the cyber-bullying but on reading other documents we decided not to make it a separate statement [D. p.1 A2].” Courtney indicated that cyber-bullying came up during discussions for the original policy language but was ultimately determined to be understood as “an example of verbal bullying” under the overall bullying umbrella [C. p.1 A4]. The original policy was implemented throughout the division as a guide or parameters for schools to work through a collaborative process in their respective communities in order to create a local policy that met their unique needs. Kennedy shared “to write [division] policy that reflects those diversities [for each] community is challenging . . . how do we write it so that the important elements are non-negotiable and also take care of understanding how that policy [needs to be structured for unique communities in the division] [Kn. p.1 A8].” Pat identified “we wanted the division

policy to be broad enough to allow local schools and local communities to be able to put their own spin on [their local school policy] . . . in the context of their community and their school community to be able to have the freedom to write it to what suits them in their community [P. p2. A20].” Shortly after schools engaged in developing and implementing their local policies there was an indication from local administrators to the division policy committee that the concept of cyber-bullying was a missing and needed component to the division Anti-bullying policy. Courtney shared that cyber-bullying was specifically placed on the division’s agenda because “it came to our attention that schools were forced to respond to it, so we needed to acknowledge it and give some directions for schools in terms of addressing it [C. p.1 A2]. According to Woods & Vedlitz (2007), issue salience, definition of the issue, and agenda priorities are determined by the values and culture of influential society individuals and groups.

Upon hearing cyber-bullying was considered by the local administrators to be a salient issue in their local communities, the division policy committee revisited the policy origin stage to include the concept of cyber-bullying within the division’s Anti-bullying Policy framework. The re-conception of the division’s Anti-bullying Policy framework corresponds with McCools (1995) perspective that when issues are identified, stakeholders lobby for a particular discourse to be accepted and works to influence the definition of the issue. These stakeholders also attempt to sway initial policy language and framework in effort to control the setting of the policy agenda. Mair (1997) also stated that social interactions between stakeholders influence concept of issue saliency.

Thus, stakeholders place political demands on policy-makers to have an effect on policy language and frameworks at this stage and throughout the process.

Policy origin can be viewed as the anchor to the whole policy process, with those who control the definition of the issue maintaining control on the policy development itself. In this research it appears that the division Anti-bullying Policy Committee was responsible for the definition of the issue of bullying under the guidance of SaskLearning parameters, and in control of the inclusion of the cyber-bullying concept in the division policy due to the encouragement to do so from their local administrators. Kennedy acknowledged that within division and local school policy is the expectation that policy would be reviewed annually, it was during this time that the division Policy Committee reviewed “what they were hearing from the local schools, what they were seeing in the research . . . taking into consideration” they were hearing cyber-bullying was a missing component to their Anti-bullying Policy, the division Policy Committee set to making policy amendments [Kn. p.2 A16]. The process by which the cyber-bullying concept was added to the division policy supports Howlett & Ramesh’s (2003) perspective that policy origin is identified as recognition of a problem where stakeholders express their core beliefs concerning the problem with the expectation that policy makers will respond accordingly.

## **Policy Adoption**

### **Research Question 2: How did the school division utilize the policy adoption stage to guide their development of a cyber-bullying policy?**

Dye (1987) explained policy adoption as the process of policy development. The division Anti-bullying Policy Committee was confident in the design and framework of their original policy with the exception that the concept of cyber-bullying was not specifically referenced. Pal (1987) indicated that the definition of an issue is the cornerstone to the entire policy and that a change in the definition results in a change of intent and direction of the policy itself. Once the division Policy Committee decided that the only revisions required of their Anti-bullying Policy was for the definition of bullying to include the concept of cyber-bullying, the committee members engaged in discussions as to the language to be used in the amended policy.

Hogewood & Gunn (1984) stated that the policy adoption stage is where possible solutions to policy issues on the agenda are discussed. The division Policy Committee debated over the use of the alternative language terms of cyber-bullying or electronic-bullying. Through collaborative discussions the committee decided that use of the term cyber-bullying could be viewed as inappropriate communications using computers and similar available technologies of that time. Kennedy revealed “we found cyber too limiting because in our minds it dealt more [communications] using web based technology but we knew it meant more than that . . . we needed to include technologies that existed such as cellphone cameras, cellphone texting and . . . we wanted a term that would be more encompassing and would include emerging technologies that weren’t on

the horizon at that point . . . so we felt electronic would be more encompassing [Kn. p.1 A5].”

Pal (1987) expressed that compromising is key when selecting and defining the issue and selecting a policy action. It was agreed upon by the committee that using the term electronic-bullying would be a more policy freeing term that would allow for all present forms of ICTs and allow for the inclusion of future technologies not known to them at the time. While the discussions regarding alternative choices for language occurred at the division level, the committee never formally defined the term electronic-bullying within the committee nor was one presented within the revised policy document. Drew expressed that while the division Policy Committee did engage in discussions of cyber and electronic-bullying, “no formal definition was ever formed for electronic-bullying” [D. p.1 A5]. The revised policy included the original Anti-bullying policy definition of bullying with the addition of electronic-bullying cited as a form of bullying. Kennedy stated that the division Policy Committee “looked at adding cyber-bullying to [the original policy]” identifying that the decision was to “blend” the concept of cyber-bullying into the original policy with the language choice of electronic-bullying embedded into the overall definition of bullying “it needed to reside within the larger definition of bullying” [Kn. p1 A8; p.2 A16, & 17].

With no revisions to the original division policy beyond this addition, the revised Anti-bullying policy was redistributed to the local schools to be implemented, continuing with the same process they had utilized with the original division Anti-bullying policy. Pat identified that it was conveyed to the local schools that they were expected to develop

local school Anti-bullying policy “in conjunction with your [local] community, and your school community” within the parameters of the division policy [P. p.2 A28]. Courtney furthered by stating schools were expected to develop their local school policy through “consultation with their community, parents, staff, students, and other community stakeholders” [C. p.2 A21]. Kennedy explained “we developed the division policy and of course then the subsequent piece of the process was for schools to develop their policy using the main thrust or elements of the division policy [Kn. p.2 A12].”

### **Policy Implementation**

#### **Research Question 3: What were the key features of the implementation process put in place to facilitate the execution of the cyber-bullying policy?**

Howlett and Ramesh (2003) indicated that this stage reflects how policy makers set their policy in motion to solve or impact the issue. As with the original division Anti-bullying policy implementation, once the bullying definition had been revised to include electronic-bullying as a form of bullying, the revised policy was to be implemented at the local school level through collaborations with the various local stakeholders, such as staff, parents, students, and community members. It is the policy implementation stage where target audience, such as policy makers, society, media, interest groups, are informed and educated on the policy (Howlett & Remesh, 2003). A copy of the division’s Anti-bullying Policy was sent to each school as resource material for their local policy development, the division website housed a link to an electronic copy of their policy for any interested parties in the division community to access, and several local



schools included a link to the division policy on their local school website for their community members to utilize.

The division Anti-bullying policy requested all schools, via their independent Safe and Respectful School Committees, to develop local school Anti-Bullying Policies to suit the needs of their communities. Each school was to engage their local Safe and Respectful School committee to spearhead local meetings to educate the community stakeholders such as local administrators, teachers, students, parents, and other interested community groups as to the division Anti-bullying policy parameters and collaborate on identifying the issues and needs for their community in developing a local Anti-bullying Policy. During the local policy development process division personnel were available, upon request, to provide support material or to be present at local meetings as a resource for information on the concept of bullying and a resource for the process of policy development but did not participate in the actual development or selection of local Anti-bullying Policy. Kennedy explained that the division Policy Committee was there to support the local schools, stating they would provide “lots of guidance, support, direction but ultimately [the local school committee had] to debate this and work it through at their community level because that’s where they would build understanding and surface the issues that are more relevant in their building than at the division level [Kn. p.2 A14].”

Essentially, each school was asked to create a policy, within the parameters of the division policy, which would meet their local needs for the concept of bullying. Once the local Anti-bullying Policy was complete, each school submitted their policy to the division office to be kept on file. Section Superintendents could review the local policy

with the local administrators if they determined it was necessary but it was not the intent of the division committee that the submission of the local policies to the division office would be for the sake of approval but rather for record of completion. This process reflected the provincial expectation that each school division in Saskatchewan submit finalized division Anti-bullying policies to SaskLearning to be filed and for record of completion, not necessarily for approval. Drew expressed that the process for policy development and submission at the local school level mirrored the expectations placed on the division by SaskLearning, “the Board [approved] policy was likely submitted to [SaskLearning] . . . similar to the process of the schools in this division . . . their policy went into a binder but not necessarily to be evaluated or assessed . . . it is just a matter of have you done that” [D. p.4 A38].

### **Policy Impact**

#### **Research Question 4: What are the perceived impacts of the local policy for cyber-bullying?**

Dye (1987) indicates the policy impact stage is where perceived impacts are investigated through policy analysis or policy evaluation. At the time of the semi-structured interviews the division had not engaged in any formal policy analysis for their division Anti-bullying policy. Participants were asked to reflect on their perceptions of the policy impact. The interview participants could not say if the policy implementation had reduced the number of electronic-bullying incidences as they did not keep an annual record at the division level of electronic-bullying events, nor were those interviewed confident such numbers were recorded at the local school levels. It was also identified by

the participants that not all division personnel or local administrators completely understood the concept of electronic-bullying and the corresponding policy language. Kim expressed “there is no specific information on cyber-bullying per se from the division level . . . it happens to be one term, electronic-bullying, within the policy definition”, identifying that the constant was that schools were “expected to effectively deal with those situations as they arise within our schools” [K. p.3 A30].

Another perspective identified by those interviewed was that improvements could be made in the recording of bullying events and the bullying incident reports themselves. There were also questions as to whether or not the design of the reports encouraged cyber-bullying events to be clearly distinguished on the form or appropriately documented. Interview participants identified that there was some confusion by local administrators in distinguishing between altercations between students and incidences of bullying. Courtney stated “I don’t think the [incident reports] are completed very well . . . [school administrators can be] quite hesitant to call something bullying . . . [we could benefit from] an education piece to teach the principals the difference between bullying and conflict . . . I think we’re getting to a better understanding of bullying [but] I don’t think we’re there on cyber-bullying [C. p.3 A30 & 33].” One of the biggest drawbacks to confronting electronic-bullying of students, according to the interview participants, is the fact that most incidences of electronic bullying is not brought to their attention and when these issues are brought to the attention of local administrators it is not always clear on how or when to respond under school jurisdiction.

Howlett & Ramesh (2003) identified that information gathered from the policy impact stage is valuable, as it holds the potential to result in a reevaluation of policy direction and issue definition if the policy is deemed as not meeting the needs of the community in effectively responding to a particular salient issue. Kim acknowledged “I think we need to look further [at electronic-bullying] the next time we do a [policy] revision . . . [to ensure] we are all on the same page in terms of what is electronic-bullying [K. p.2 A14].” The interview participants shared that some of the policy implementation phase and the policy impact phase were sacrificed due to division interests and pressures to engage in new policy development for unrelated education initiatives. Courtney expressed that division understanding of electronic-bullying “needs to become more of a priority . . . it’s not that we don’t wish to respond better . . . I think it is always something that we’re going to have to work on . . . I think it is not a lack of interest or that it is not a priority . . . I think it is more a reflection of how much is on the plate of schools and administrators, like the multiple curriculum changes that are coming [C. p.3 A33].”

The interview participants identified that a policy analysis of the division Anti-bullying policy would provide some insight as to the understanding of the policy language and assist in identifying the effect the policy had on the intended parties and the targeted issues. Courtney stated “electronic forms of bullying are rampant and difficult to monitor, investigate and respond to . . . I certainly see the time where perhaps we may need to just have our Anti-bullying policy and have our electronic-bullying policy as a separate one . . . it makes me want to form a committee and take another crack at this [C.

p.2 A17 & 18].” Pat expressed that by adding the electronic-bullying component to the bullying definition it “disallowed the notion that most of the electronic kind of bullying doesn’t happen in our building, therefore, we are not required to respond . . . it being a specific part of our Anti-bullying Policy basically implied that yes we do sometimes have responsibility [to respond] in these situations [P. p.4 A55].

### **Connections to Dynamic Policy Cycle**

Originally SaskLearning directed all school divisions in Saskatchewan to identify bullying as a salient issue in need of addressing. SaskLearning provided a model policy for school divisions as a resource to assist divisions in creating their own Anti-bullying policy. The model policy identified that bullying could take many forms including cyber-bullying and provided some description as to the form cyber-bullying may take. In developing their own policy the division Anti-bullying policy committee decided to simply use the term bullying in their policy without specifically listing the different forms of bullying believing all forms were implied under the bullying term itself. After implementing the original policy, local administrators identified that events at the local level had brought them to realize the cyber component was a relevant issue that needed to be included within the division policy and asked the division to provide policy guidance on the issue. The issue had been identified as a salient issue due to awareness of international and national media coverage on cyber-bullying, the issue was presented in literary research and educational articles, some parents had identified cyber-bullying as a salient issue, and a few incidences of cyber-bullying were brought to the attention of some local administrators.

The division Policy Committee decided that they were confident in the overall framework and policy language of their original policy due to the numerous collaborative processes for information gathering and educational purposes prior to developing the policy. It was decided that the division committee alone would revisit the policy definition to discuss policy language that addressed the concept of cyber-bullying. After discussion possible alternatives the division committee decided to embed the term electronic-bullying into the original definition of bullying and to leave the remaining components of the policy unaltered. Local Safe and Respectful School Committees were provided the amended policy and directed to continue the process of developing and implementing their local anti-bullying policies as they had been doing with recognition of the amended definition of bullying. Each of the division's local school communities were provided resource material from the division Policy Committee to assist in policy development and initiatives to assist in educating the communities on the policy and issues of bullying. Division personnel were available upon request to attend local meetings and information sessions but were never directly part of the local policy development and policy selection.

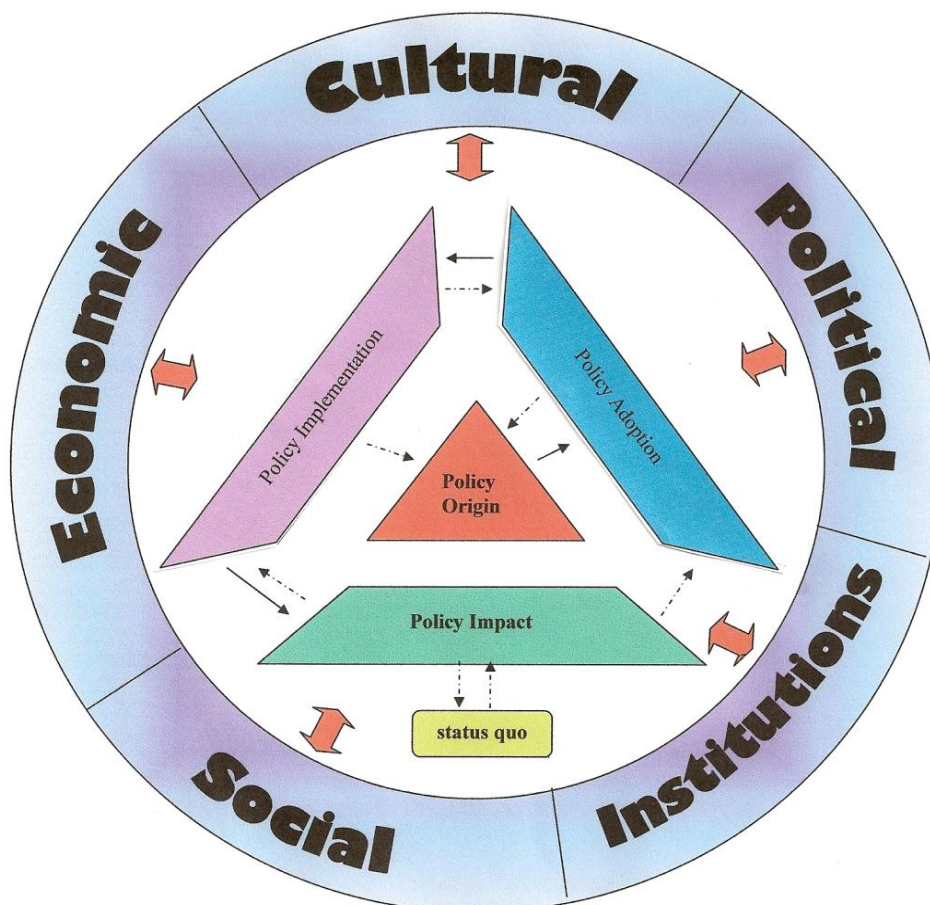
Once a school had completed their local Anti-bullying Policy they were required to submit their policy to the division office, not necessarily for approval but as evidence of completion. To date, no formal evaluation or assessment of policy impact has completed at the division level. It thought by the interview participants that the implementation of the amended policy was not performed well and the policy impact phase engaged in by the division due to unrelated division policy interests and pressures

that pulled the committee in directions to develop policies for other salient issues in the division.

The policy process utilized by this division can be reviewed utilizing an application of the Figures 4 Internal Dynamics of the Policy Process Cycle and 3 Dynamics of the Policy Process Cycle. These models help to demonstrate the social, cultural, institutional, political, and economic influence of various stakeholders and policy actors on the policy process of this division in responding to the issue of cyber-bullying and the pathway in which the policy cycled through the process of development.

**Figure 4**

*Internal Dynamic Policy Cycle*

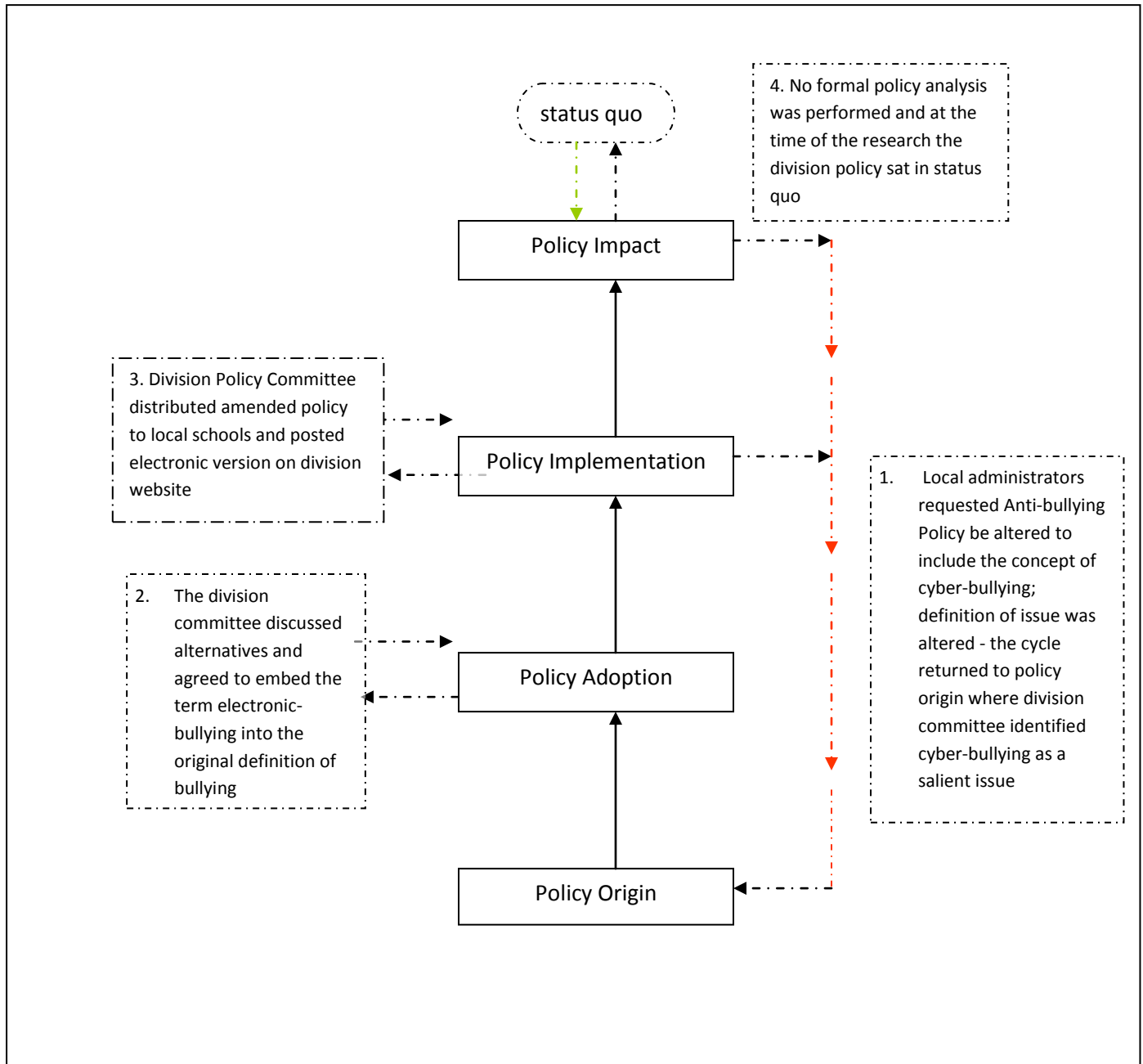


In Figure 4 the model demonstrates that outside influences in the areas of economic, social, political, society, and institution can place pressure on the policy cycle to manipulate issue selection, formation of definitions, the structure and language of the policy itself, how policy is implemented, as well as influence the policy analysis as to the impact the policy had on the intended parties and issues. The research on this division's policy process regarding cyber-bullying several stakeholders influenced the policy process itself. From the political domain SaskLearning set a mandate that all school division in the province were to accept bullying as a salient issue and place it on the division policy agenda. While SaskLearning did not dictate the policy to the divisions it did provide a model policy as an exemplar for divisions to reference when developing their own Anti-bullying policies. The specific topic of cyber-bullying was placed on the policy agenda by the request of local administrators, who in turn were influenced by societal and cultural pressures of parents and students identifying cyber-bullying as an relevant issue that needed addressing. Institutions involved in general meetings such as counselors, city police liaisons and educational research articles provided institutional influence to draw cyber-bullying to the attention of policy makers. Political, institutional, and economic influence resulted in the division committee ultimately moving away from the implementation and policy impact phase of the Anti-bullying policy to engage in unrelated policy development initiatives for alternate salient issues.

At different points in the policy cycle each of these influences shaped the chosen issue for the policy agenda, the structure of the policy itself, the process in which it was implemented, and had a direct impact on the amount of attention and support the policy



received. The policy process that the issue of cyber-bullying underwent in this division has been demonstrated by personalizing the framework for Figure 3, Dynamics of the Policy Process Cycle from page 49 of this paper, to show the sequence of policy development events specific to this division in place of the generic sequence of events originally displayed in Figure 3. Figure 6, Review of Division Policy Cycle, is an amended version of Figure 3 which was created to summarize the process in which this division went through in developing their Anti-bullying Policy with a cyber-bullying context. We enter this framework with the knowledge that the original division Anti-bullying policy had been developed and implemented, the steps followed that displays the amended policy progression in the cycle are numbered in sequence.

**Figure 6***Review of Division Policy Cycle*

### **Summary and Future Direction**

This research was focused on a school division's use of the policy cycle in responding to the issue of cyber-bullying. By limiting the research to the division response to the issue of cyber-bullying, a precise account of the events that occurred in developing policy at the division level was revealed. This study was also restricted to the literature available and the accounts of participant experiences prior to July 2009 in order to remain constant with the knowledge and accounts of events of the interview participants at the time of data collection. By analyzing the data collected it appeared to me that the bullying incidences were responded to prior to official policy and the development of the policy only assisted division and school personnel in understanding and responding to all forms of bullying. The data indicated that the division Anti-bullying Policy development process followed the policy cycle format; however, it appeared that the implementation and impact stages of the cycle were incomplete and therefore difficult to completely analyze. Interview participants identified there was a wide range of understanding for the concept of electronic-bullying by division and school personnel. The data suggested that time constraints for policy completion, coupled with the fact that the policy was being formed just prior to the explosion of electronic-discourse capacity for students, may have resulted in a quick fix of adding the term 'electronic' to the general bullying policy definition. It is possible the lack of understanding of the concept of electronic-bullying and unease with how and when to respond to such incidences are connected to the lack of specific policy direction by the division policy itself. However, by providing the opportunity for local schools to develop

their own Anti-bullying policy within the parameters of the division policy, there was an opportunity for local schools and communities to engage in an educational experience that met the needs of their community as well as allow for growth in their knowledge of electronic-bullying and the policy process itself.

By engaging in this policy analysis research I believe I have gained a better understanding of the policy cycle and the process of creating school division policies. Prior to my literature research, data collection, and data analysis experience I believe I had the naive belief that creating policy should be an easy process, all that was needed was to identify the issue, research the alternative solutions, choose the best course of action, set your plan in motion, and make amendments when necessary to ensure the policy remains effective, and voila! Little did I realize there was much more to this process? While coding my data into Levin's (2001) four policy analysis categories of policy origin, policy adoptions, policy implementation, and policy impact, I began to realize that borders between these categories were not so clear and grey areas would present themselves every once and awhile. I also originally questioned Kingdon's (1985) and Pal's (1987) perspective that analyzing policy from a rational perspective could be difficult because people rarely behave rationally as their previous experience and knowledge can alter their rational thoughts and policy choices. After performing my research I realized that even with self-discipline and focus it is more difficult than I thought to work through the web of research, real events, and the demands placed on the policy committee and select the most rational policy to best meet the needs of a school division full of various unique communities.

Upon completion of my research I established a more accurate understanding of how various interest groups can place cultural, political, economic, social, and institutional pressure on the policy development cycle, which inevitably influence the language and framework of the policy created. When I first read Yanow's (2000) words expressions that the truth of a policy lies more in the actions of those implementing the policy than the actual policy language itself I didn't fully understand their meaning. I now realize that even if the policy writers believe the words to be clear to their intentions, personal experience, knowledge, and culture can affect how policy implementers interpret the policy and adapt its original meaning. I have also gained an appreciation for the importance of providing policy language definitions if policy makers wish the intent to the policy to be fully understood and implemented effectively. And finally I have attained an enhanced perspective on the tribulations for school division policy committee's to both implement policy and monitor a policy's impact while feeling pressure and expectations from both within their division and outside policy stakeholders to turn their focus to new policy development.

From my research findings I feel future study within this division could be broadened to include interviews with policy actors and stakeholders at local levels within the division. In order to reveal a more broad scope and sequence of events for the entire policy process, it would be interesting for policy actors and stakeholders from local levels within the division to be interviewed regarding their experiences and the process utilized in developing a local policy within the parameters of the division policy. It could also be argued that including interviews with policy actors and stakeholders from the provincial

departments responsible for directing all Saskatchewan school division to form anti-bullying policies would provide a more comprehensive account of the policy cycle for the context of cyber-bullying. If a fully developed analysis of the policy process, from provincial levels through local school levels, was completed for this division, it might be of interest to complete the study within another division to see if similar patterns and experiences would be found.

In my literary review my research identified some inappropriate cyber-behavior by students that have resulted in the development of legal precedents in the US and the UK, but at the time of my research no legal precedent regarding cyber-bullying had been formed here in Canada. I presented a few specific incidences with connections to cyber-bullying that have gained media attention both in Canada and here in Saskatchewan, but to date our legal cases involving cyber-bullying have either been settled out of court or the victims have not engaged in formal legal action. Since my research Canadian media publications regarding ICT's have included connections between student cyber-bullying and some teen suicides, a BC principal's use of a cell phone signal jammer was determined to be illegal, a Saskatchewan school board is being sued for forwarding a student's cell phone contents to the police, and media reports have exposed frustrations that schools do not have the jurisdiction to respond to cyber-bullying that originates off – campus and the legal system does not offer official guidance for dealing with cyber-bullying. Media publications have also revealed there are those who believe that creating more laws specific to cyber-bullying is redundant to our existing laws and those they feel a better answer is increased education for students on the proper etiquette of ICT use.

The federal and provincial legal systems expect schools to provide a safe educational environment for students but have not provided legal guidance to our Canadian school divisions, nor individual schools, as to where their jurisdiction begins and ends when it comes to responding to inappropriate cyber-behavior. Without a clear picture of their jurisdiction parameters, school and division administrators are left to muddle through this legal minefield with little to no guidance. I feel future research into settled, on-going, and rejected legal cases that involve inappropriate student cyber-discourse would also provide an interesting research topic. Why it is that comparable Nations to ours have legal guidance for school jurisdiction for issues of cyber-bullying while the Canadian federal and provincial courts have not provided us with any direction?

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**APPENDIX A:**

**LETTER OF REQUEST TO CONDUCT RESEARCH – DIRECTOR OF  
EDUCATION**

Department of Educational Administration  
 28 Campus Drive  
 University of Saskatchewan  
 Saskatoon, SK S7N 0X1  
 Date:

Mr./Mrs.\*\*\*\*\*  
 Director of Education

Dear Mr. /Mrs. \*\*\*\*\*:

Re: Permission to conduct research

I am a graduate student of Educational Administration at the University of Saskatchewan. I am about to conduct a policy study of cyber-bullying policy development by a Saskatchewan school division. The goal of this policy study is to determine how and why policy decisions regarding cyber-bullying were developed and how such a policy direction has been understood and put into action by members of the school division's senior management team. Hopefully, this policy study will contribute new insights into the effect of cyber-bullying issues on the development of effective cyber-communication policies for schools in Saskatchewan school divisions. The policy study is entitled: *Cyber Bullying: Policy Responses and Perceived Impacts in a Saskatchewan School Division*.

The purpose of this letter is to request your permission to:

- contact members of your senior administrative staff who were involved in the development and adoption stages of the studied policy direction;

Each participant will receive a cover letter explaining the purpose of the interview. The interview is voluntary in nature and participants may withdraw their participation at any time without penalty. The lead-researchers recognize that data collected during the interview will be from a professional viewpoint. This study has been approved by the Behavioral Research Ethics Board of the University of Saskatchewan on \_\_\_\_ (date). If there are any concerns regarding ethical issues, the Ethics Officer at the University of Saskatchewan can be contacted by a collect call at 306-966-2084.

I have attached my application and approval for ethics and all related documents. Permission to contact your school division-based and school-based staff for a potential interview may be indicated by email ([jnc577@mail.usask.ca](mailto:jnc577@mail.usask.ca)) or in writing to 314 Chotem Crescent, Saskatoon SK S7N 4M3. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me by phone at 306-652-4231 or by e-mail. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Ms. Jodine Coates  
Masters Student of Educational Administration  
314 Chotem Crescent  
Saskatoon, SK S7N 4M3  
Phone: 306-652-4231 (home)  
Email: [jnc577@mail.usask.ca](mailto:jnc577@mail.usask.ca)

**APPENDIX B:**  
**DIVISION PERSONNEL**



Department of Educational Administration  
 28 Campus Drive  
 University of Saskatchewan  
 Saskatoon, SK S7N 0X1  
 Date:

Mr. /Mrs. Division Personnel

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Dear Mr. /Mrs. \*\*\*\*\*:

The purpose of this project is to determine how and why policy decisions regarding cyber-bullying were developed in a school division and how such a policy direction has been understood and put into action by members of the school division's senior management team. I am asking for your help by having you participate in an interview pertaining to your personal understanding of the main features of the policymaking process that led to the enactment of local policy on cyber-bullying in your school division and how it impacted staff, parents, students, and the community. The interview should take approximately 30-45 minutes to complete. If you are willing to take part in this interview, please indicate by filling out the attached consent form (Appendix D) by \_\_\_\_\_ (date). Please return the consent form to us using the self-addressed stamped envelope.

Understand that you may withdraw from this study for any reason, at anytime, without penalty of any sort. If you decide to withdraw, all the data collected from you will be destroyed if you choose. The interview will be audio tape recorded. You are free to answer only those questions with which you are comfortable and that you can ask to have the recorder turned off at any time. If you decide to be a participant in this study, together we will set up an appropriate date to have you participate in the interview.

There is minimal risk involved in this study. I will keep all comments confidential. There is no expectation for you to feel obliged to participate in the study since participation is voluntary. No penalty will accrue as a result of not participating in the study. No information will be used in the study that will identify a particular teacher.

If you have any questions concerning the study, please feel free to contact me at any time. This study has been approved on ethical grounds by the Behavioral Research Ethics Board on April 23, 2008 and the Superintendent of Schools on \_\_\_\_\_ (date). Any questions regarding your rights as a participant may be addressed to the Behavioral Research Ethics Committee through the Ethics Officer at the University of Saskatchewan by calling collect to 306-966-2084. You may request an executive summary of the

study's findings by contacting me by email ([jnc577@mail.usask.ca](mailto:jnc577@mail.usask.ca)) or by phone at 306-652-4231. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Ms. Jodine Coates  
Masters Student of Educational Administration  
314 Chotem Crescent  
Saskatoon, SK S7N 4M3  
Phone: 306-652-4231 (home)  
Email: [jnc577@mail.usask.ca](mailto:jnc577@mail.usask.ca)

**APPENDIX C:****LETTER OF REQUEST TO CONDUCT RESEARCH - PRINCIPALS**

Department of Educational Administration  
 28 Campus Drive  
 University of Saskatchewan  
 Saskatoon, SK S7N 0X1  
 Date:

Mr. /Mrs. Principal  
 \*\*\*\*\*  
 \*\*\*\*\*  
 \*\*\*\*\*

Dear Mr. /Mrs. \*\*\*\*\*:

Re: Permission to conduct research

The purpose of this letter is to request permission to contact teachers and support staffs in your school that were impacted by cyber-bullying policies in your school division. This is regarding an interview based on their perspective of the policy process and impact of cyber-bullying in your school division. Each teacher and support staff will receive a cover letter explaining the purpose of the interview. The interview is voluntary in nature and they may withdraw their participation at any time without penalty. The researcher recognizes that data collected during the interview will be from a professional viewpoint. This study has been approved by the Behavioral Research Ethics Board of the University of Saskatchewan on \_\_\_\_ (date). If there are any concerns regarding ethical issues, the Ethics Officer at the University of Saskatchewan can be contacted by a collect call at 306-966-2084.

I have attached the application and approval for ethics and all related documents. Permission to contact your staff for a potential interview may be indicated by email ([jnc577@mail.usask.ca](mailto:jnc577@mail.usask.ca)) or in writing to 314 Chotem Crescent, Saskatoon SK S7N 4M3. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me by phone at 306-652-4231 or by email. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Ms. Jodine Coates  
 Masters Student of Educational Administration  
 314 Chotem Crescent  
 Saskatoon, SK S7N 4M3  
 Phone: 306-652-4231 (home)  
 Email: [jnc577@mail.usask.ca](mailto:jnc577@mail.usask.ca)

**APPENDIX D:**  
**CONSENT FORM**

You are invited to participate in a study entitled: *Cyber-Bullying: Policy Responses and Perceived Impacts in a Saskatchewan School Division*. If you decide that you are interested in participating, please sign the bottom of the form to indicate your interest. Please read this form carefully, and feel free to ask any questions you might have. Please return the signed form to me in the self-addressed stamped envelope provided.

**Researcher:** Ms. Jodine Coates at the University of Saskatchewan. Contact information: (306) 652-4231 or by email: [jnc577@mail.usask.ca](mailto:jnc577@mail.usask.ca).

**Purpose and Procedure:** The goal of this policy study is to determine how and why policy decisions regarding cyber-bullying were developed and how such a policy direction has been understood and put into action by members of the school division's senior management team. The researcher will collect data by administering an audio recorded interview with the selected Board and Senior Administrative Staff members. The interviews will be approximately 30-45 minutes in duration. The information will be obtained and analyzed with the permission of the Superintendent of Schools. The researcher will travel to the Board office, schools or to any location convenient to the participant.

**Potential Risks:** There is minimal anticipated risk associated with participation in this study. Participants have been sampled from a small group and therefore may be identifiable to others on the basis of what the participants have said. Participation in this study is voluntary and the anonymity of those who choose to participate in the study is assured in the presentation of results. Pseudonyms will be used to represent the school division and participant's names. Participants may withdraw from the study for any reason and at any point without penalty. There is no deception intended in this study.

There is no expectation for you to feel obliged to participate in the study since participation is voluntary. No penalty will accrue as the result of not participating in our study. No information will be used in the study that will identify a particular research participant. I will restate this ethical promise at the beginning of the interview.

**Potential Benefits:** This policy study will contribute new insights into the kinds of policymaking process that are the most effective in terms of addressing contested issues such as cyber-bullying by describing and explaining the successes and limitations of various policy making processes used in different school divisions.

**Storage of Data:** All data will be locked and retained by the research supervisor for a period of five years in accordance with the ethical guidelines of the University of Saskatchewan. The Superintendent of Schools will be given by mail an executive summary of the research results and a copy of the project upon request. In addition, the results may be presented at workshops and prepared for possible publication. There will be public access to the completed project in the Educational Administration Department of the College of Education, University of Saskatchewan.

**Confidentiality:** The privacy of the participant will be protected in two ways. First, the researcher will have direct contact with the participants who shall remain anonymous in the presentation of the results of the study. Although direct quotations from the interview may be used, participants will be given a pseudonym, and all identifying information will be removed from the report. Secondly, to further provide anonymity of the participants, data collected will be aggregated prior to reporting results and will be securely stored by the researcher. The content of the interviews will not be shared with anyone.

**Right to Withdraw:** Your participation is voluntary, and you may withdraw from the study (notification by e-mail, letter or phone) for any reason, at any time, without penalty of any sort. The participant may withdraw without loss of any entitlements. If you withdraw from the study at any time, any data that you have contributed will be destroyed at your request.

**Questions:** If you have any questions concerning the study, please feel free to ask me at any point; you are also free to contact the researcher at the number provided above if you have questions at a later time. This study has been approved on ethical grounds by the University of Saskatchewan Behavioral Research Ethics Board on **(insert date)**. Any questions regarding your rights as a participant may be addressed to that committee through the Ethics Office at (306) 966-2084. Out of town participants may call collect. The Board Chair will be given by mail an executive summary of the research results and a copy of the project upon request. There will be public access to the completed project in the Educational Administration Department at the College of Education, University of Saskatchewan, if participants wish to view the results of the research.

**Transcript Review:** Participants will be given the opportunity to review the final transcript and add, delete, or alter in any fashion any of the transcript's information. Once the transcript is written, it will be sent out by mail to the participants. The participants will then be requested to sign a transcript release form (Appendix L) to acknowledge by their signature that the transcript accurately reflects what they said or intended to say. A paid postage envelope will be provided with a return address on the envelope to be returned along with the signed transcript, including any changes that have been made by the participant.

**Consent to Participate:** I have read and understand the description provided above. I have been provided with an opportunity to ask questions and my questions have been answered satisfactorily. I consent to participate in the study described above, understanding that I may withdraw this consent at any time. A copy of this consent form has been given to me for my records.

\*Prior to the interview the consent form will be reread to you to ensure your interest in participating. Your consent form will be stored separately from the interview data.

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(Name of Participant)

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(Date)

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(Signature of Participant)

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(Signature of Researchers)

Ms. Jodine Coates  
Masters Student of Educational Administration  
314 Chotem Crescent  
Saskatoon, SK S7N 4M3  
Phone: 306-652-4231 (home)  
Email: [jnc577@mail.usask.ca](mailto:jnc577@mail.usask.ca)



**APPENDIX E:**  
**TRANSCRIPT RELEASE FORM**

*Cyber Bullying: Policy Responses and Perceived Impacts in a Saskatchewan School Division.*

I, \_\_\_\_\_, have received the complete transcript of my personal interview in this study, and have been provided with the opportunity to add, delete, or alter the information from the transcript as appropriate. I acknowledge that the transcript accurately reflects what I said in my personal interview with Ms. Jodine Coates. I hereby authorize the release of this transcript to Ms. Jodine Coates to be used in the manner described in the consent form. I have received a copy of this Data/Transcript Release Form for my own records.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Researcher

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

**APPENDIX F:**  
**GENERIC INTERVIEW PROTOCOL**

Research Phases	Generic Questions	Timeline
Analysis of policy origins and development process	<b>Questions:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Are there any limitations to your freedom in tackling the issue of cyber-bullying?</i></li> <li>• <i>What is your understanding of the scope of cyber-bullying in the province ... in your own school division?</i></li> <li>• <i>How do your school/division policies define and address the specific concept of cyber-bullying?</i></li> <li>• <i>How and why the policy direction on cyber-bullying was placed on the policy agenda of your school division?</i></li> <li>• <i>Who was involved in developing and enacting the local policy on cyber-bullying?</i></li> <li>• <i>What happened in the process through which the policy direction on cyber-bullying took place?</i></li> <li>• <i>What were the key features of the policy-making process in your school division?</i></li> <li>• <i>In what way do your school/division policies identify the roles and responsibilities of division personnel and school/community members in responding to events of cyber-bullying?</i></li> <li>• <i>What type of procedures and processes do your school/division policies identify to guide response to incidences of cyber-bullying?</i></li> <li>• <i>What specific policies does your division have in place that permits school level administration to address cyber-bullying?</i></li> </ul> <p><b>Aims:</b> This part of the interview protocol aims at providing a local policy history of <i>cyber-bullying</i> (why was the policy made and when it was made?); an account of the changing political and social trends related to the policy direction being studied, a profile of the process through which the policy was made, the main policy actors involved, and the core beliefs that shaped the policy on school closure.</p>	Jan. – June. 2009
	<b>Questions:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>How was the policy on cyber-bullying conceptualized, perceived, and interpreted by the various stakeholders or groups in your community?</i></li> <li>• <i>What were the key features of the implementation process put in place to facilitate the implementation of the policy?</i></li> <li>• <i>What kind of process was put in place to educate staff,</i></li> </ul>	
Analysis of policy implementation Process		Jan. – June. 2009

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*students, and parents of the new cyber-bullying policy?*

- *How controversial was the implementation of the policy on school cyber-bullying in your division?*
- *Who were the main agents of resistance? Why? What was the essence of their message? How did you engage these agents of resistance and with what results?*
- *How does your school/division communicate its cyber-bullying policies with the various members of the school community?*

**Aims:** This part of the interview protocol will provide insights into the process and the extent to which the policy direction under study have been translated into policy actions and practices at the division and school level.

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**Questions:**

- *How were the transformations associated with the implementation of the policy on cyber-bullying experienced by public school teachers, administrative staff, parents, and members of community-based organizations?*
- *What were the impacts of cyber-bullying policy implementation in your division in terms of school governance procedures, adaptations to course curriculum, and parental involvement in the pursuit of policy goals?*
- *Did you notice a decrease of cyber bullying incident in your school division? Do you attribute the decrease to the implementation of the policy?*

Analysis of  
policy impacts

Jan. – June.  
2009

**Aims:** The aims of this research phase are to reveal changes in the behavior and/or practices of school divisions and school-based administrative, support and teaching staff and of individuals (parents, students) and community-based organization directly impacted by the policy.

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